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LADY JANE

By

MRS. C. V. JAMISON

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From Dear Mrs. Graney

To Jane Fleming

Christmas Dec. 25, 1913.

LADY JANE

MR. GEX GIVES LADY JANE A LESSON IN DANCING. (SEE PAGE 112.)

LADY JANE

BY

MRS. C. V. JAMISON

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1911

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THE DE VINNE PRESS.

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LADY JANE

Chapter I

THE BLUE HERON

It was in the beautiful Teche country, on a passenger train of the Louisiana and Texas Railroad, that "Lady Jane" first saw a blue heron.

The month was July, the weather was intensely hot, and the dusty, ill-ventilated car was closely packed with a motley crowd. Among the travelers were Texas ranchmen, cattle dealers from the Opelousas, Cajan farmers from the Attakapas, nuns, priests, itinerant merchants, tired, dusty women, dressed in cotton gowns and sun-bonnets, and barefooted, white-headed children, very noisy and restless, wandering constantly back and forth between the water-tank and their lunch-baskets, eating cold chicken or munching stale biscuit. The ranchmen and cattle dealers talked in loud, good-natured voices; the nuns bent over their prayer-books; the priests yawned and nodded; the merchants displayed their wares; the children fretted; the babies cried, while the weary

mothers patted, tossed, and coaxed them with untiring love and patience; and the train flew on, with its hot, dusty passengers, over as beautiful a country as ever was seen, through level stretches of sugar-cane and rice, crossed by narrow bayous that intersected the green plane, catching here and there gleams of sunlight, like silver threads, through the dark cypress swamps, whose bleached trees were crowned with hoary moss, while the trunks were clothed in living green, and festooned with the lovely blossoms of the jasmine, and wild passion-flowers entwined with masses of delicate vines, twisted together in cords and loops of luxuriant verdure, that clambered upward from the dank soil toward the sunlight and the blue sky. In places the track seemed to run over beds of glossy latanea and swaying swamp-grasses, where glistened little shallow pools covered with lily-pads and white fragrant blossoms.

In spite of the intense heat, the day was beautiful. Great banks of white clouds drifted across the sun, softening its ruddy glare, and throwing fantastic shadows over the floating prairies and purple islands of cypress that dotted the broad yellow expanse. Now and then, a flock of birds, startled by the rush of the train, rose up with a shrill cry and noisy whirr of wings, and soared away in a long, trailing line toward the lazy drifting clouds.

Of all the passengers, there were, perhaps, none who noticed or cared for the strange and beautiful scenery, that constantly changed as the train sped on, except the quiet occupants of one seat, who were so unlike those around them as to attract no little attention and curiosity. They were a woman and a child; the lady, young, elegant, and pretty, was dressed in deep mourning; the little girl, who was about five years of age, wore a white cambric frock, plain, but exquisitely fine, a wide straw hat, and long black-silk stockings, and her neat shoes were tied with tiny bows. Her skin was delicately fair and rosy, her eyes of purple-blue were shaded by long

dark lashes, and her hair, of a pure golden yellow, hung in a thick, wavy mass down to the loops of her black sash. She was a dainty, delicate little creature, and, although very warm and very tired, was evidently too well-bred to annoy others with restlessness or impatience, but remained quietly kneeling on the seat, at the window of the car, her bright eyes fixed on the beautiful landscape, as the train rushed along.

The mother had thrown back her heavy crape veil, and a little ripple of hair as yellow as the child's showed beneath the widow's cap. She looked very weary and ill; her eyes were heavy and swollen with weeping; her face, thin and worn in spite of her youth, was flushed with fever, and her lips were parched and drawn as if she suffered intense pain. At times, she pressed her hand to her forehead and closed her eyes; then, she would start suddenly and look about her, with a glance of apprehension, and her clasp would tighten around the child at her side, as if she feared to lose her hold of her even for a moment; and, now and then, the little girl would lean back her rosy face, and press it to her mother's flushed cheek, saying softly:

"Does your dear head ache, now, mama?"

"A little, darling," the mother would answer, as she smoothed the golden hair that fell over her black gown.

Then the child would turn back to the window to watch the flight of birds, the purple islands of cypress, and the shadows sailing over the billowy grasses of the floating prairies. And so the train sped on and on, and the morning was verging to noon, when suddenly she turned with eyes full of delight, and said to her mother, whose head had drooped into her open palms:

"Look, mama! Oh, look at the lovely river! See what big trees, and pretty houses, and there is a big boat coming, and lots and lots of lambs are playing in the field. Oh, I wish we could stop here, and walk about a little! Can't we, mama?"

"No, my dear; there 's no time to get off," replied the mother, raising her head and looking out wearily. "Be patient, darling; we shall soon be in New Orleans, and there you shall have everything you wish."

The train had stopped at a small station on the Teche to take on a passenger, who entered with a brisk step, and slipped into a seat just vacated opposite the mother and child. He was a handsome lad of about sixteen years. His merry brown eyes looked out frankly from under his dark brows; he had a pleasant smile, and the manly, self-reliant air of one accustomed to travel alone.

In one hand he carried a traveling-bag, and in the other a small basket, over which a piece of thin cloth was tightly tied. He sat down, glancing around him with a bright smile, and placing the basket beside him, tapped on the thin cover with his forefinger, and chirruped merrily to the occupant. Presently an answering "Peep—peep!" came from the depths of the basket, at which he laughed heartily.

From the first moment that the new passenger entered the car, the little yellow head of the child was turned in his direction, and the deep blue eyes were fixed on him with an expression of serious interest.

When he laughed so merrily, her lips trembled and her eyes filled with tears, and overcome with some emotion that she vainly tried to suppress, she buried her face on her mother's shoulder and whispered brokenly:

"Oh, mama, mama, he laughs as papa used to."

"Hush, hush, my darling!" said the mother, bending an agonized face over the child, while she soothed her gently; "Don't cry, my love, don't cry, or I shall be ill again."

In an instant the little head was raised resolutely, and the child smiled with the tears glistening on her lashes, while her eyes turned again toward the stranger, who seemed to attract her greatly.

The boy had noticed the lovely little creature and the sorrowful young mother, and his generous heart went out to them at once; therefore, when the child raised her tearful eyes and looked at him so earnestly, he smiled responsively and invitingly.

Again the little head went shyly down to the mother's shoulder, and she whispered:

"Mama, there 's something alive in that basket. How I wish I could see it!"

"My dear, he 's a stranger. I can't ask him to show it to you; he might not be willing."

"Oh, I think he would, mama! He smiled at me when I looked at him. Can't *I* ask him? Please,— please let me."

The mother turned a side glance in the direction of the boy, who moved a little nearer the end of the seat and looked at her intelligently, as if he understood that they were speaking of him. Their eyes met, and he smiled good-naturedly, while he nodded and pointed to the basket. "I thought she would like to see it," he said, as he began untying the string that fastened the cover.

"You 're very kind to gratify her curiosity," said the mother, in a gentle voice; "she 's sure that it 's something alive."

"It is," laughed the boy. "It 's very much alive; so much so that I 'm almost afraid to take off the cover."

"Go, my darling, and see what it is," said the mother, as the child slipped past her and stood before the boy, looking at him from under the shadow of her black hat with eager, inquiring eyes.

"I don't think you 've ever seen anything like him before. They 're not common, and he 's a funny little beggar. I thought you 'd like to see him when I saw you looking at the basket. He 's very tame, but we must be careful he does n't get out. With all these windows open, he 'd be gone before we knew it. Now I 'll lift the cover and hold my hand so that you can peep in."

The child's head was bent over the basket, intense curiosity in her wide eyes, and a little, anxious smile on her parted lips. "Oh, oh, how pretty! What is it?" she asked, catching a glimpse of a strange-looking bird, with a very long bill and little, bright eyes, huddled up at the bottom of the basket. "I never saw one like it. What is it?" she repeated, her sparkling eyes full of delight and surprise.

"It 's a blue heron, and they 're very rare about here."

"He 's not blue—not *very* blue; but he 's pretty. I wish I could just touch his feathers."

"You can. You can put your hand in the basket; he won't bite."

"I 'm not afraid," she said with confidence, as she stroked the soft feathers.

"If these windows were closed I 'd take him out, and let you see him walk. He 's very funny when he walks; and he 's so intelligent. Why, he comes to me when I call him."

"What do you call him? What is his name?"

"I call him Tony, because when he was very small he made a noise like 'tone—tone.'"

"Tony," she repeated, "that 's a pretty name; and it 's funny too," she added, dimpling with smiles.

"Now, won't you tell me *your* name?" asked the boy. "I don't mean to be rude, but I 'd like to know your name."

"Why, yes, I 'll tell you," she replied, with charming frankness; "I 'm called 'Lady Jane.'"

"Lady Jane!" repeated the boy; "why, that 's a very odd name."

"Papa always called me Lady Jane, and now every one does."

The mother looked at the child sadly, while tears dimmed her eyes.

"Perhaps you would like to see the little fellow, too," said the boy, rising and holding the basket so that the lady could look into it. "White herons are very common about here, but blue herons are something of a curiosity."

"Thank you. It is indeed very odd. Did you find it yourself?" she asked with some show of interest.

"Yes, I came upon it quite unexpectedly. I was hunting on my uncle's plantation, just beyond the station where I got on. It was almost dark; and I was getting out of the swamp as fast as I could, when right under my feet I heard 'tone—tone,' and there was this little beggar, so young that he could n't fly, looking up at me with his bright eyes. I took him home and tamed him, and now he knows my voice the moment I speak. He 's very amusing."

The boy was standing, resting the basket on the arm of the seat, and the child was caressing the bird with both dimpled hands.

"She likes him very much," he said, smiling brightly.

"Yes, she is very fond of pets; she has left hers behind, and she misses them," and again the mother's eyes filled.

"I wish,—I wish you 'd let me give her Tony—if—if you 'd like her to have him."

"Oh, thank you! No, no, I could n't allow you to deprive yourself."

"I should be very willing, I assure you. I must give him away. I 'm going to give him to some one when I get to the city. I can't take him to college with me, and there 's no one in particular I care to give him to. I wish you 'd let me give him to this little lady," urged the handsome fellow, smiling into the child's upturned eyes as he spoke.

"Oh, mama,—dear, sweet mama, let me have him; do, do let me have him!" cried Lady Jane, clasping her dimpled hands in entreaty.

"My dear, it would be so selfish to take it. You must not, indeed you must not," said the mother, looking from the child to the boy in great perplexity.

"But if I wish it — if it would be a pleasure to me," insisted the boy, flushing with eager generosity.

"Well, I 'll think of it. You are really very kind," she replied wearily. "We still have some hours to decide about it. I find it very hard to refuse the child, especially when you are so generous, but I think she ought not to take it."

The boy took the basket with a disappointed air, and turned toward the seat opposite. "I hope you 'll decide to let her have it," he said respectfully.

"Mama," whispered Lady Jane with her face pressed close to her mother's, "if you *can*, if you think it 's right, please let me have the blue heron. You know, I had to leave my kitten, and Carlo, and the lambs, and — and — I 'm so sorry, and — I 'm lonesome, mama."

"My darling, my darling,— if you want the bird so much, I 'll try to let you have him. I 'll think about it."

"And, mama, may I go and sit by the basket and put my hand on his feathers?"

"Let her come and sit with me," said the boy; "she seems tired, and I may be able to amuse her."

"Thank you. Yes, she *is* very tired. We have come a long way,— from San Antonio,— and she 's been very good and patient."

The boy made room for his charming little companion next the window, and after lowering the blind, so that the bird could not escape, he took the pet from the basket, and placed him in Lady Jane's arms.

"See here," he said, "I 've sewed this band of leather around his leg, and you can fasten a strong string to it. If your mama allows you to have him, you can always tie him to something when you go

out, and leave him alone, and he will be there quite safe when you come back."

"I should never leave him alone. I should keep him with me always," said the child.

"But, if you should lose him," continued the boy, spreading one of the pretty wings over Lady Jane's plump little arm, "I 'll tell you how you can always know him. He 's marked. It 's as good as a brand. See those three black crosses on his wing feathers. As he grows larger they will grow too, and no matter how long a time should pass without your seeing him, you 'd always know him by these three little crosses."

"If mama says I can have him, I can take him with me, can't I?"

"Certainly, this basket is very light. You can carry it yourself."

"You know," she whispered, glancing at her mother, who had leaned her head on the back of the seat in front of her, and appeared to be sleeping, "I want to see Carlo and kitty, and the ranch, and all the lambs; but I must n't let mama know, because it 'll make her cry."

"You 're a good little girl to think of your mother," said the boy, who was anxious to cultivate her confidence, but too well-bred to question her.

"She has no one now but me to love her," she continued, lowering her voice. "They took papa from us, and carried him away, and mama says he 'll never come back. He 's not gone to San Antonio, he 's gone to heaven; and we can't go there now. We 're going to New York; but I 'd rather go to heaven where papa is, only mama says there are no trains or ships to take us there, now, but by-and-by we 're going if we 're very good."

The boy listened to her innocent prattle with a sad smile, glancing uneasily now and then at the mother, fearful lest the

plaintive little voice might reach her ear; but she seemed to be sleeping, sleeping uneasily, and with that hot flush still burning on her cheeks.

"Have you ever been in New York?" he asked, looking tenderly at the little head nestled against his arm. She had taken off her hat, and was very comfortably curled up on the seat with Tony in her lap. The bird also seemed perfectly satisfied with his position.

"Oh, no; I 've never been anywhere only on the ranch. That 's where Carlo, and kitty, and the lambs were, and my pony, Sunflower; he was named Sunflower, because he was yellow. I used to ride on him, and papa lifted me on, and took me off; and Sunflower was so gentle. Dear papa—I—I loved him best of all and now he 's gone away, and I can't see him again."

Here the rosy little face was buried in Tony's feathers, and something like a sob made the listener's heart ache.

"Come, come," he said softly, "you must n't cry, or I shall think you don't care for the blue heron."

In a moment, her little head was raised, and a smile shone through her tears. "Oh, I do, I do. And if I can have him I won't cry for the others."

"I 'm quite sure your mama will consent. Now, let me tell you about my home. I live in New Orleans, and I have lots of pets," and the boy went on to describe so many delightful things that the child forgot her grief in listening; and soon, very soon the weary little head drooped, and she was sleeping with her rosy cheek pressed against his shoulder, and Tony clasped close in her arms.

And so the long, hot afternoon passed away, and the train sped on toward its destination, while the mother and the child slept, happily unconscious of the strange fate that awaited them in that city, of which the spires and walls were even now visible, bathed in the red light of the evening sun.

Chapter II

TONY GOES WITH LADY JANE

And now that the end of the journey was so near, the drowsy passengers began to bestir themselves. In order to look a little more presentable, dusty faces and hands were hastily wiped, frowsy heads were smoothed, tumbled hats and bonnets were arranged, and even the fretful babies, pulled and coaxed into shape, looked less miserable in their soiled garments, while their mothers wore an expression of mingled relief and expectation.

Lady Jane did not open her eyes until her companion gently tried to disengage Tony from her clasp in order to consign him to his basket; then she looked up with a smile of surprise at her mother, who was bending over her. "Why, mama," she said brightly, "I 've been asleep, and I had such a lovely dream; I thought I was at the ranch, and the blue heron was there too. Oh, I 'm sorry it was only a dream!"

"My dear, you must thank this kind young gentleman for his care of you. We are near New Orleans now, and the bird must go to his basket. Come, let me smooth your hair and put on your hat."

"But, mama, am I to have Tony?"

The boy was tying the cover over the basket, and, at the child's question, he looked at the mother entreatingly. "It will amuse her," he said, "and it 'll be no trouble. May she have it?"

"I suppose I must consent; she has set her heart on it."

The boy held out the little basket, and Lady Jane grasped it rapturously.

"Oh, how good you are!" she cried. "I 'll never, never forget you, and I 'll love Tony always."

At that moment the young fellow, although he was smiling brightly, was smothering a pang of regret, not at parting with the blue heron, which he really prized, but because his heart had gone out to the charming child, and she was about to leave him, without any certainty of their ever meeting again. While this thought was vaguely passing through his mind, the lady turned and said to him:

"I am going to Jackson Street, which I believe is uptown. Is there not a nearer station for that part of the city, than the lower one?"

"Certainly, you can stop at Gretna; the train will be there in a few minutes. You cross the river there, and the ferry-landing is at the foot of Jackson Street, where you will find carriages and horse-cars to take you where you wish to go, and you will save an hour."

"I 'm very glad of that; my friends are not expecting me, and I should like to reach them before dark. Is it far to the ferry?"

"Only a few blocks; you 'll have no trouble finding it," and he was about to add, "Can't I go with you and show you the way?" when the conductor flung open the door and bawled, "Grate-na! Grate-na! passengers for Grate-na!"

Before he could give expression to the request, the conductor had seized the lady's satchel, and was hurrying them toward the door. When he reached the platform, the train had stopped, and they had already stepped off. For a moment, he saw them standing on the dusty road, the river and the setting sun behind them—the black-robed, graceful figure of the woman, and the fair-haired child with her violet eyes raised to his, while she clasped the little basket and smiled.

He touched his hat and waved his hand in farewell; the mother lifted her veil and sent him a sad good-by smile, and the child pressed her rosy fingers to her lips, and gracefully and gravely threw

him a kiss. Then the train moved on; and the last he saw of them, they were walking hand in hand toward the river.

As the boy went back to his seat, he was reproaching himself for his neglect and stupidity. "Why did n't I find out her name?—or the name of the people to whom she was going?—or why did n't I go with her? It was too bad to leave her to cross alone, and she a stranger and looking so ill. She seemed hardly able to walk and carry her bag. I don't see how I could have been so stupid. It would n't have been much out of my way, and, if I 'd crossed with them, I should have found out who they were. I did n't want to seem too presuming, and especially after I gave the child the heron; but I wish I 'd gone with them. Oh, she 's left something," and in an instant he was reaching under the seat lately occupied by the object of his solicitude.

"It 's a book, 'Daily Devotions,' bound in russia, silver clasp, monogram 'J. C.,'" he said, as he opened it; "and here 's a name."

On the fly-leaf was written

JANE CHETWYND.
From Papa,
NEW YORK, Christmas, 18—.

"'Jane Chetwynd,' that must be the mother. It can't be the child, because the date is ten years ago. 'New York.' They 're from the North then; I thought they were. Hello! here 's a photograph."

It was a group, a family group—the father, the mother, and the child; the father's a bright, handsome, almost boyish face, the mother's not pale and tear-stained, but fresh and winsome, with smiling lips and merry eyes, and the child, the little "Lady Jane," clinging to her father's neck, two years younger, perhaps, but the same lovely, golden-haired child.

The boy's heart bounded with pleasure as he looked at the sweet little face that had such a fascination for him.

"I wish I could keep it," he thought, "but it 's not mine, and I must try to return it to the owner. Poor woman! she will be miserable when she misses it. I 'll advertise it to-morrow, and through it I 'm likely to find out all about them."

Next morning some of the readers of the principal New Orleans journals noticed an odd little advertisement among the personals:

> Found, "Daily Devotions"; bound in red russia-leather, silver clasp, with monogram, "J. C." Address,
>
> BLUE HERON, P. O. Box 1121.

For more than a week this advertisement remained in the columns of the paper, but it was never answered, nor was the book ever claimed.

Chapter III

Madame Jozain

Madame Jozain was a creole of mixed French and Spanish ancestry. She was a tall, thin woman with great, soft black eyes, a nose of the hawk type, and lips that made a narrow line when closed. In spite of her forbidding features, the upper part of her face was rather pleasing, her mild eyes had a gently appealing expression when she lifted them upward, as she often did, and no one would have believed that the owner of those innocent, candid eyes could have a sordid, avaricious nature, unless he glanced at the lower part of her face, which was decidedly mean and disagreeable. Her nose and mouth had a wily and ensnaring expression, which was at the same time cruel and rapacious. Her friends, and she had but few, endowed her with many good qualities, while her enemies, and they were numerous, declared that she was but little better than a fiend incarnate; but Father Ducros, her confessor, knew that she was a combination of good and evil, the evil largely predominating.

With this strange and complex character, she had but two passions in life. One was for her worthless son, Adraste, and the other was a keen desire for the good opinion of those who knew her. She always wished to be considered something that she was not,— young, handsome, amiable, pious, and the best *blanchisseuse de fin* in whatever neighborhood she hung out her sign.

And perhaps it is not to be wondered at, that she felt a desire to compensate herself by duplicity for what fate had honestly deprived her of, for no one living had greater cause to complain of a cruel

destiny than had Madame Jozain. Early in life she had great expectations. An only child of a well-to-do baker, she inherited quite a little fortune, and when she married the *débonnair* and handsome André Jozain, she intended, by virtue of his renown and her competency, to live like a lady. He was a politician, and a power in his ward, which might eventually have led him to some prominence; but instead, this same agency had conducted him, by dark and devious ways, to life-long detention in the penitentiary of his State — not, however, until he had squandered her fortune, and lamed her for life by pushing her down-stairs in a quarrel. This accident, had it disabled her arms, might have incapacitated her from becoming a *blanchisseuse de fin*, which occupation she was obliged to adopt when she found herself deprived of her husband's support by the too exacting laws of his country.

In her times of despondency it was not her husband's disgrace, her poverty, her lameness, her undutiful son, her lost illusions, over which she mourned, as much as it was the utter futility of trying to make things seem better than they were. In spite of all her painting, and varnishing, and idealizing, the truth remained horribly apparent: She was the wife of a convict, she was plain, and old, and lame; she was poor, miserably poor, and she was but an indifferent *blanchisseuse de fin*, while Adraste, or Raste, as he was always called, was the worst boy in the State. If she had ever studied the interesting subject of heredity, she would have found in Raste the strongest confirmation in its favor, for he had inherited all his father's bad qualities in a greater degree.

On account of Raste's unsavory reputation and her own incompetency, she was constantly moving from one neighborhood to another, and, by a natural descent in the scale of misfortune, at last found herself in a narrow little street, in the little village of Gretna, one of the most unlovely suburbs of New Orleans.

MADAME JOZAIN.

The small one-story house she occupied contained but two rooms, and a shed, which served as a kitchen. It stood close to the narrow sidewalk, and its green door was reached by two small steps. Madame Jozain, dressed in a black skirt and a white sack, sat upon these steps in the evening and gossiped with her neighbor. The house was on the corner of the street that led to the ferry, and her greatest amusement (for, on account of her lameness, she could not run with the others to see the train arrive) was to sit on her door-step and watch the passengers walking by on their way to the river.

On this particular hot July evening, she felt very tired, and very cross. Her affairs had gone badly all day. She had not succeeded with some lace she had been doing for Madame Joubert, the wife of the grocer, on the levee, and Madame Joubert had treated her crossly —in fact had condemned her work, and refused to take it until made up again; and Madame Jozain needed the money sorely. She had expected to be paid for the work, but instead of paying her that "little cat of a Madame Joubert" had fairly insulted her. She, Madame Jozain, née Bergeron. The Bergerons were better than the Jouberts. *Her* father had been one of the City Council, and had died rich, and her husband — well, her husband had been unfortunate, but he was a gentleman, while the Jouberts were common and always had been. She would get even with that proud little fool; she would punish her in some way. Yes, she would do her lace over, but she would soak it in soda, so that it would drop to pieces the first time it was worn.

Meantime she was tired and hungry, and she had nothing in the house but some coffee and cold rice. She had given Raste her last dime, and he had quarreled with her and gone off to play "craps" with his chums on the levee. Besides, she was very lonesome. for there was but one house on her left, and beyond it was a wide stretch of pasture, and opposite there was nothing but the blank

walls of a row of warehouses belonging to the railroad, and her only neighbor, the occupant of the next cottage, had gone away to spend a month with a daughter who lived "down town," on the other side of the river.

So, as she sat there alone, she looked around her with an expression of great dissatisfaction, yawning wearily, and wishing that she was not so lame, so that she could run out to the station, and see what was going on: and that boy, Raste, she wondered if he was throwing away her last dime. He often brought a little money home. If he did not bring some now, they would have no breakfast in the morning.

Then the arriving train whistled, and she straightened up and her face took on a look of expectancy.

"Not many passengers to-night," she said to herself, as a few men hurried by with bags and bundles. "They nearly all go to the lower ferry, now."

In a moment they had all passed, and the event of the evening was over. But no!—and she leaned forward and peered up the street with fresh curiosity. "Why, here come a lady and a little girl, and they 're not hurrying at all. She 'll lose the ferry if she does n't mind. I wonder what ails her?—she walks as if she could n't see."

Presently the two reached her corner, a lady in mourning, and a little yellow-haired girl carefully holding a small basket in one hand, while she clung to her mother's gown with the other.

Madame Jozain noticed, before the lady reached her, that she tottered several times, as if about to fall, and put out her hand, as if seeking for some support. She seemed dizzy and confused, and was passing on by the corner, when the child said entreatingly, "Stop here a minute, mama, and rest." Then the woman lifted her veil and saw Madame Jozain looking up at her, her soft eyes full of compassion.

"Will you allow me to rest here a moment? I 'm ill and a little faint,— perhaps you will give me a glass of water?"

"Why, certainly, my dear," said madame, getting up alertly, in spite of her lameness. "Come in and sit down in my rocking-chair. You 're too late for the ferry. It 'll be gone before you get there, and you may as well be comfortable while you wait — come right in."

The exhausted woman entered willingly. The room was neat and cool, and a large white bed, which was beautifully clean, for madame prided herself upon it, looked very inviting.

The mother sank into a chair, and dropped her head on the bed; the child set down the basket and clung to her mother caressingly, while she looked around with timid, anxious eyes.

Madame Jozain hobbled off for a glass of water and a bottle of ammonia, which she kept for her laces; then, with gentle, deft hands, she removed the bonnet and heavy veil, and bathed the poor woman's hot forehead and burning hands, while the child clung to her mother murmuring, "Mama, dear mama, does your head ache now?"

"I 'm better now, darling," the mother replied after a few moments; then turning to madame, she said in her sweet, soft tones, "Thank you so much. I feel quite refreshed. The heat and fatigue exhausted my strength. I should have fallen in the street had it not been for you."

"Have you traveled far?" asked madame, gently sympathetic.

"From San Antonio, and I was ill when I started;" and again she closed her eyes and leaned her head against the back of the chair.

At the first glance, madame understood the situation. She saw, from the appearance of mother and child, that they were not poor. In this accidental encounter was a possible opportunity, but how far she could use it she could not yet determine; so she said only, "That 's a long way to come alone"; then she added, in a casual tone, "especially when one 's ill."

The lady did not reply, and madame went on tentatively, "Perhaps some one 's waiting for you on the other side, and 'll come back on the ferry to see what 's become of you."

"No. No one expects me; I'm on my way to New York. I have a friend living on Jackson Street. I thought I would go there and rest a day or so; but I did wrong to get off the train here. I was not able to walk to the ferry. I should have gone on to the lower station, and saved myself the exertion of walking."

"Well, don't mind now, dear," returned madame, soothingly. "Just rest a little, and when it 's time for the boat to be back, I 'll go on down to the ferry with you. It 's only a few steps, and I can hobble that far. I 'll see you safe on board, and when you get across, you 'll find a carriage."

"Thank you, you 're very good. I should like to get there as soon as possible, for I feel dreadfully ill," and again the weary eyes closed, and the heavy head fell back against its resting-place.

Madame Jozain looked at her for a moment, seriously and silently; then she turned, smiling sweetly on the child. "Come here, my dear, and let me take off your hat and cool your head while you 're waiting."

"No, thank you, I 'm going with mama."

"Oh, yes, certainly; but won't you tell me your name?"

"My name is Lady Jane," she replied gravely.

"Lady Jane? Well, I declare, that just suits you, for you are a little lady, and no mistake. Are n't you tired, and warm?"

"I 'm very hungry; I want my supper," said the child frankly.

Madame winced, remembering her empty cupboard, but went on chatting cheerfully to pass away the time.

Presently the whistle of the approaching ferry-boat sounded; the mother put on her bonnet, and the child took the bag in one hand, and the basket in the other. "Come, mama, let us go," she cried eagerly.

"Dear, dear," said madame, solicitously, "but you look so white and sick. I'm afraid you can't get to the ferry even with me to help you. I wish my Raste was here; he's so strong, he could carry you if you gave out."

"I think I can walk; I'll try," and the poor woman staggered to her feet, only to fall back into Madame Jozain's arms in a dead faint.

Chapter IV

AN INTERRUPTED JOURNEY

For a moment, madame debated on what was best to be done; then, finding herself equal to the emergency, she gently laid the unconscious woman on the bed, unfastened her dress, and slowly and softly removed her clothing. Although madame was lame, she was very strong, and in a few moments the sufferer was resting between the clean, cool sheets, while her child clung to her cold hands and sobbed piteously.

"Don't cry, my little dear, don't cry. Help me to bathe your mama's face; help me like a good child, and she 'll be better soon, now she 's comfortable and can rest"

With the thought that she could be of some assistance, Lady Jane struggled bravely to swallow her sobs, took off her hat with womanly gravity, and prepared herself to assist as nurse.

"Here 's smelling salts, and cologne-water," she said, opening her mother's bag. "Mama likes this; let me wet her handkerchief."

Madame Jozain, watching the child's movements, caught a glimpse of the silver fittings of the bag, and of a bulging pocket-book within it, and, while the little girl was hanging over her mother, she quietly removed the valuables to the drawer of her *armoire*, which she locked, and put the key in her bosom.

"I must keep these things away from Raste," she said to herself; "he 's so thoughtless and impulsive, he might take them without considering the consequences."

For some time madame bent over the stranger, using every remedy she knew to restore her to consciousness, while the child assisted her with thoughtfulness and self-control, really surprising in one of her age. Sometimes her hot tears fell on her mother's white face, but no sob or cry escaped her little quivering lips, while she bathed the pale forehead, smoothed the beautiful hair, and rubbed the soft, cold hands.

At length, with a shiver and a convulsive groan, the mother partly opened her eyes, but there was no recognition in their dull gaze.

"Mama, dear, dear mama, are you better?" implored the child, as she hung over her and kissed her passionately.

"You see she 's opened her eyes, so she must be better; but she 's sleepy," said madame gently. "Now, my little dear, all she needs is rest, and you must n't disturb her. You must be very quiet, and let her sleep. Here 's some nice, fresh milk the milkman has just brought. Won't you eat some rice and milk, and then let me take off your clothes, and bathe you, and you can slip on your little nightgown that 's in your mother's bag; and then you can lie down beside her and sleep till morning, and in the morning you 'll both be well and nicely rested."

Lady Jane agreed to madame's arrangements with perfect docility, but she would not leave her mother, who had fallen into a heavy stupor, and appeared to be resting comfortably.

"If you 'll please to let me sit by the bed close to mama and eat the rice and milk, I 'll take it, for I 'm very hungry."

"Certainly, my dear; you can sit there and hold her hand all the time; I 'll put your supper on this little table close by you."

And madame bustled about, apparently overflowing with kindly attentions. She watched the child eat the rice and milk, smiling benevolently the while; then she bathed her, and put on the fine

little nightgown, braided the thick silken hair, and was about to lift her up beside her mother, when Lady Jane exclaimed in a shocked voice:

"You must n't put me to bed yet; I have n't said my prayers." Her large eyes were full of solemn reproach as she slipped from madame's arms down to the side of the bed. "Mama can't hear them, because she 's asleep, but God can, for *he* never sleeps." Then she repeated the touching little formula that all pious mothers teach their children, adding fervently several times, "and please make dear mama well, so that we can leave this place early to-morrow morning."

Madame smiled grimly at the last clause of the petition, and a great many curious thoughts whirled through her brain.

As the child rose from her knees her eyes fell on the basket containing the blue heron, which stood quite neglected, just where she placed it when her mother fainted.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, springing toward it. "Why, I forgot it! My Tony, my dear Tony!"

"What is it?" asked madame, starting back in surprise at the rustling sound within the basket. "Why, it 's something alive!"

"Yes, it 's alive," said Lady Jane, with a faint smile. "It 's a bird, a blue heron. Such a nice boy gave it to me on the cars."

"Ah," ejaculated madame, "a boy gave it to you; some one you knew?"

"No, I never saw him before."

"Don't you know his name?"

"That 's funny," and the child laughed softly to herself. "No, I don't know his name. I never thought to ask; besides he was a stranger, and it would n't have been polite, you know."

"No, it would n't have been polite," repeated madame. "But what are you going to do with this long-legged thing?"

"It's not a *thing*. It's a blue heron, and they're very rare," returned the child stoutly.

She had untied the cover and taken the bird out of the basket, and now stood in her nightgown and little bare feet, holding it in her arms, and stroking the feathers softly, while she glanced every moment toward the bed.

"I'm sure I don't know what to do with him to-night. I know he's hungry and thirsty, and I'm afraid to let him out for fear he'll get away"; and she raised her little anxious face to madame inquiringly, for she felt overburdened with her numerous responsibilities.

"Oh, I know what we'll do with him," said madame, alertly — she was prepared for every emergency. "I've a fine large cage. It was my parrot's cage; he was too clever to live, so he died a while ago, and his empty cage is hanging in the kitchen. I'll get it, and you can put your bird in it for to-night, and we'll feed him and give him water; he'll be quite safe, so you need n't worry about him."

"Thank you very much," said Lady Jane, with more politeness than warmth. "My mama will thank you, too, when she wakes."

After seeing Tony safely put in the cage, with a saucer of rice for his supper, and a cup of water to wash it down, Lady Jane climbed up on the high bed, and not daring to kiss her mother good-night lest she might disturb her, she nestled close to her. Worn out with fatigue, she was soon sleeping soundly and peacefully.

For some time Madame Jozain sat by the bed, watching the sick stranger, and wondering who she was, and whether her sudden illness was likely to be long and serious. "If I could keep her here, and nurse her," she thought, "no doubt she would pay me well. I'd rather nurse than do lace; and if she's very bad she'd better not be moved. I'd take good care of her, and make her comfortable; and if she's no friends about here to look after her, she'd be better off with me than in the hospital. Yes, it would be cruel to send her to

the hospital. Ladies don't like to go there. It looks to me as if she 's going to have a fever," and madame laid her fingers on the burning hand and fluttering pulse of the sleeper. "This is n't healthy, natural sleep. I 've nursed too many with fever, not to know. I doubt if she 'll come to her senses again. If she does n't no one will ever know who she is, and I may as well have the benefit of nursing her as any one else; but I must be careful, I must n't let her lie here and die without a doctor. That would never do. If she 's not better in the morning I 'll send for Doctor Debrot; I know he 'll be glad to come, for he never has any practice to speak of now, he 's so old and stupid; he 's a good doctor, and I 'd feel safe to have him."

After a while she got up and went out on the doorstep to wait for Raste. The night was very quiet, a fresh breeze cooled the burning heat, the stars shone brightly and softly, and as she sat there alone and lifted her mild eyes toward the sky no one would have dreamed of the strange thoughts that were passing through her mind. Now she was neither hungry nor lonesome; a sudden excitement thrilled her through and through. She was about to engage in a project that might compensate her for all her misfortunes. The glimpse she had of money, of valuables, of possible gain, awakened all her cupidity. The only thing she cared for now was money. She hated work, she hated to be at the beck and call of those she considered beneath her. What a gratification it would be to her to refuse to do Madame Joubert's lace, to fling it at her, and tell her to take it elsewhere! With a little ready money, she could be so independent and so comfortable. Raste had a knack of getting together a great deal in one way and another. He was lucky; if he had a little to begin with he could, perhaps, make a fortune. Then she started, and looked around as one might who suddenly found himself on the brink of

an awful chasm. From within she heard the sick stranger moan and toss restlessly; then, in a moment, all was quiet again. Presently, she began to debate in her mind how far she should admit Raste to her confidence. Should she let him know about the money and valuables she had hidden? The key in her bosom seemed to burn like a coal of fire. No, she would not tell him about the money. While taking the child's nightgown from the bag, she had discovered the railroad tickets, two baggage checks, and a roll of notes and loose change in a little compartment of the bag. He would think that was all; and she would never tell him of the other.

"RASTE."

At that moment, she heard him coming down the street, singing a rollicking song. So she got up, and hobbled toward him, for she feared he might waken the sleepers. He was a great overgrown, red-faced, black-eyed fellow, coarse and strong, with a loud, dashing kind of beauty, and he was very observing, and very shrewd. She often said he had all his father's cunning and penetration, therefore she must disguise her plans carefully.

"Hallo, mum," he said, as he saw her limping toward him, her manner eager, her face rather pale and excited; "what 's up now?" It was unusual for her to meet him in that way.

"Hush, hush, Raste. Don't make a noise. Such a strange thing has happened since you went out!" said madame, in a low voice. "Sit down here on the steps, and I 'll tell you."

Then briefly, and without much show of interest, she told him of the arrival of the strangers, and of the young woman's sudden illness.

"And they 're in there asleep," he said, pointing with his thumb in the direction of the room. "That 's a fine thing for you to do — to saddle yourself with a sick woman and a child."

"What could I do?" asked madame indignantly. "You would n't have me turn a fainting woman into the street? It won't cost anything for her to sleep in my bed to-night."

"What is she like? Is she one of the poor sort? Did you look over her traps? Has she got any money?" he asked eagerly.

"Oh, Raste, Raste; as if I searched her pockets! She 's beautifully dressed, and so is the child. She 's got a fine watch and chain, and when I opened her bag to get the child's nightgown, I saw that it was fitted up with silver."

"What luck!" exclaimed Raste brightly. "Then she 's a swell, and to-morrow when she goes away she 'll give you as much as a 'fiver.'"

"I don't believe she 'll be able to go to-morrow. I think she 's down for a long sickness. If she 's no better in the morning, I want you to cross and find Dr. Debrot."

"Old Debrot? That 's fun! Why, he 's no good — he 'll kill her."

"Nonsense; you know he 's one of the best doctors in the city."

"Sometimes, yes. But you can't keep the woman here, if she 's sick; you 'll have to send her to the hospital. And you did n't find out her name, nor where she belongs? Suppose she dies on your hands? What then?"

"If I take care of her and she dies, I can't help it; and I may as well have her things as any one else."

"But has she got anything worth having? Enough to pay you for your trouble and expense?" he asked. Then he whistled softly, and added, "Oh, mum, you 're a deep one, but I see through you."

"I don't know what you mean, boy," said madame, indignantly. "Of course, if I nurse the woman, and give up my bed to her, I

expect to be paid. I hate to send her to the hospital, and I don't know her name, nor the name of her friends. So what can I do?"

"Do just what you 've planned to do, mum. Go right ahead, but be careful and cover up your tracks. Do you understand?"

Madame made no reply to this disinterested piece of advice, but sat silently thinking for some time. At last she said in a persuasive tone, "Did n't you bring some money from the levee? I 've had no supper, and I intend to sit up all night with that poor woman. Can't you go to Joubert's and get me some bread and cheese?"

"Money, money—look here!" and the young scapegrace pulled out a handful of silver. "That 's what I 've brought."

An hour later madame and Raste sat in the little kitchen, chatting over their supper in the most friendly way; while the sick woman and the child still slept profoundly in the small front room.

Chapter V

LAST DAYS AT GRETNA

The next morning, Madame Jozain sent Raste across the river for Dr. Debrot, for the sick woman still lay in a heavy stupor, her dull eyes partly closed, her lips parched and dry, and the crimson flush of fever burning on cheek and brow.

Before Raste went, Madame Jozain took the traveling bag into the kitchen, and together they examined its contents. There were the two baggage-checks, the tickets and money, besides the usual articles of clothing, and odds and ends; but there was no letter, nor card, nor name, except the monogram, *J. C.*, on the silver fittings, to assist in establishing the stranger's identity.

"Had n't I better take these," said Raste, slipping the baggage-checks into his pocket, "and have her baggage sent over? When she comes to, you can tell her that she and the young one needed clothes, and you thought it was best to get them. You can make that all right when she gets well," and Raste smiled knowingly at madame, whose face wore an expression of grave solicitude as she said:

"Hurry, my son, and bring the doctor back with you. I 'm so anxious about the poor thing, and I dread to have the child wake and find her mother no better."

When Doctor Debrot entered Madame Jozain's front room, his head was not as clear as it ought to have been, and he did not observe anything peculiar in the situation. He had known madame, more or less, for a number of years, and he might be considered one

of the friends who thought well of her. Therefore, he never suspected that the young woman lying there in a stupor was any other than the relative from Texas madame represented her to be. And she was very ill, of that there could be no doubt; so ill as to awaken all the doctor's long dormant professional ambition. There were new features in the case; the fever was peculiar. It might have been produced by certain conditions and localities. It might be contagious, it might not be, he could not say; but of one thing he was certain, there would be no protracted struggle, the crisis would arrive very soon. She would either be better or beyond help in a few days, and it was more than likely that she would never recover consciousness. He would do all he could to save her, and he knew Madame Jozain was an excellent nurse; she had nursed with him through an epidemic. The invalid could not be in better hands. Then he wrote a prescription, and while he was giving madame some general directions, he patted kindly the golden head of the lovely child, who leaned over the bed with her large, solemn eyes fixed on her mother's face, while her little hands caressed the tangled hair and burning cheeks.

"Her child?" he asked, looking sadly at the little creature.

"Yes, the only one. She takes it hard. I really don't know what to do with her."

"Poor lamb, poor lamb!" he muttered, as madame hurried him to the door.

Shortly after the doctor left, there was a little ripple of excitement, which entered even into the sick-room — the sound of wheels, and Raste giving orders in a subdued voice, while two large, handsome trunks were brought in and placed in the corner of the back apartment. These two immense boxes looked strangely out of place amid their humble surroundings; and when madame looked at them she almost trembled, thinking of the difficulty of getting rid of such

witnesses should a day of reckoning ever come. When the little green door closed on them, it seemed as if the small house had swallowed up every trace of the mother and child, and that their identity was lost forever.

For several days the doctor continued his visits, in a more or less lucid condition, and every day he departed with a more dejected expression on his haggard face. He saw almost from the first that the case was hopeless; and his heart (for he still had one) ached for the child, whose wide eyes seemed to haunt him with their intense misery. Every day he saw her sitting by her mother's side, pale and quiet, with such a pitiful look of age on her little face, such repressed suffering in every line and expression as she watched him for some gleam of hope, that the thought of it tortured him and forced him to affect a cheerfulness and confidence which he did not feel. But, in spite of every effort to deceive her, she was not comforted. She seemed to see deeper than the surface. Her mother had never recognized her, never spoken to her, since that dreadful night, and, in one respect, she seemed already dead to her. Sometimes she seemed unable to control herself, and would break out into sharp, passionate cries, and implore her mother, with kisses and caresses, to speak to her — to her darling, her baby. "Wake up, mama, wake up! It 's Lady Jane! It 's darling! Oh, mama, wake up and speak to me!" she would cry almost fiercely.

Then, when madame would tell her that she must be quiet, or her mother would never get well, it was touching to witness her efforts at self-control. She would sit for hours silent and passive, with her mother's hand clasped in hers, and her lips pressed to the feeble fingers that had no power to return her tender caress.

Whatever was good in Madame Jozain showed itself in compassion for the suffering little one, and no one could have been more faithful than she in her care of both the mother and child; she felt

such pity for them, that she soon began to think she was acting in a noble and disinterested spirit by keeping them with her, and nursing the unfortunate mother so faithfully. She even began to identify herself with them; they were hers by virtue of their friendlessness; they belonged to no one else, therefore they belonged to her; and, in her self-satisfaction, she imagined that she was not influenced by any unworthy motive in her treatment of them.

One day, only a little more than a week after the arrival of the strangers, a modest funeral wended its way through the narrow streets of Gretna toward the ferry, and the passers stopped to stare at Adraste Jozain, dressed in his best suit, sitting with much dignity beside Dr. Debrot in the only carriage that followed the hearse.

"It 's a stranger, a relative of Madame Jozain," said one who knew. "She came from Texas with her little girl, less than two weeks ago, and yesterday she died, and last night the child was taken down with the same fever, and they say she 's unconscious to-day, so madame could n't leave her to go to the funeral. No one will go to the house, because that old doctor from the other side says it may be catching."

That day the Bergeron tomb in the old St. Louis cemetery was opened for the first time since Madame Jozain's father was placed there, and the lovely young widow was laid amongst those who were neither kith nor kin.

When Raste returned from the funeral, he found his mother sitting beside the child, who lay in the same heavy stupor that marked the first days of the mother's illness. The pretty golden hair was spread over the pillow; under the dark lashes were deep violet shadows, and the little cheeks glowed with the crimson hue of fever.

Madame was dressed in her best black gown, and she had been weeping freely. At the sight of Raste in the door, she started up and burst into heart-breaking sobs.

"Oh, *mon cher*, oh, *mon ami*, we are doomed. Was ever any one so unfortunate? Was ever any one so punished for a good deed? I 've taken a sick stranger into my house, and nursed her as if she were my own, and buried her in my family tomb, and now the child 's taken down, and Doctor Debrot says it is a contagious fever, and we may both take it and die. That 's what one gets in this world for trying to do good!"

"Nonsense, mum, don't look on the dark side; old Debrot don't know. I 'm the one that gave it out that the fever was catching. I did n't want to have people prying about here, finding out everything. The child 'll be better or worse in a few days, and then we 'll clear out from this place, raise some money on the things, and start fresh somewhere else."

"Well," said madame, wiping away her tears, much comforted by Raste's cheerful view of the situation, "no one can say that I have n't done my duty to the poor thing, and I mean to be kind to the child, and nurse her through the fever whether it 's catching or not. It 's hard to be tied to a sick bed this hot weather; but I 'm almost thankful the little thing 's taken down, and is n't conscious, for it was dreadful to see the way she mourned for her mother. Poor woman, she was so young and pretty, and had such gentle ways. I wish I knew who she was, especially now I 've put her in the Bergeron tomb."

Chapter VI

PEPSIE

Every one about that part of Good Children Street knew Pepsie. She had been a cripple from infancy, and her mother, Madelon, or "Bonne Praline," as she was called, was also quite a noted figure in the neighborhood. They lived in a tiny, single cottage, wedged in between the pharmacist, on the corner, and M. Fernandez, the tobacconist, on the other side. There was a narrow green door, and one long window, with an ornamental iron railing across it, through which the interior of the little room was visible from the outside. It was a very neat little place, and less ugly than one would expect it to be. A huge four-post bed, with red tester and lace-covered pillows, almost filled one side of the room; opposite the bed a small fireplace was hung with pink paper, and the mantel over it was decorated with a clock, two vases of bright paper flowers, a blue bottle, and a green plaster parrot; a small armoire, a table above which hung a crucifix and a highly colored lithograph of the Bleeding Heart, and a few chairs completed the furniture of the quaint little interior; while the floor, the doorsteps, and even the sidewalk were painted red with powdered brick-dust, which harmonized very well with the faded yellow stucco of the walls and the dingy green of the door and batten shutter.

Behind this one little front room was a tiny kitchen and yard, where Madelon made her pralines and cakes, and where Tite Souris, a half-grown darky, instead of a "little mouse," washed, cooked, and scrubbed, and "waited on Miss Peps" during Madelon's absence;

for Madelon was a merchant. She had a stand for cakes and pra lines up on Bourbon Street, near the French Opera House, and thither she went every morning, with her basket and pans of fresh pralines, sugared pecans, and calas *tout chaud*, a very tempting array of dainties, which she was sure to dispose of before she returned at night; while Pepsie, her only child, and the treasure of her life, remained at home, sitting in her high chair by the window, behind the iron railing.

And Pepsie sitting at her window was as much a part of the street as were the queer little houses, the tiny shops, the old vegetable woman, the cobbler on the *banquette*, the wine merchant, or the grocer. Every one knew her: her long, sallow face with flashing dark eyes, wide mouth with large white teeth, which were always visible in a broad smile, and the shock of heavy black hair twisted into a quaint knot on top of her head, which was abnormally large, and set close to the narrow, distorted shoulders, were always visible, "from early morn till dewy eve," at the window; while her body below the shoulders was quite hidden by a high table drawn forward over her lap. On this table Pepsie shelled the pecans, placing them in three separate piles, the perfect halves in one pile, those broken by accident in another, and those slightly shriveled, and a little rancid, in still another. The first were used to make the sugared pecans for which Madelon was justly famous; the second to manufacture into pralines, so good that they had given her the sobriquet of "Bonne Praline"; and the third pile, which she disdained to use in her business, nothing imperfect ever entering into her concoctions, were swept into a box, and disposed of to merchants who had less principle and less patronage.

All day long Pepsie sat at her window, wielding her little iron nut-cracker with much dexterity. While the beautiful clean halves fell nearly always unbroken on their especial pile, she saw every-

PEPSIE AT WORK.

thing that went on in the street, her bright eyes flashed glances of recognition up and down, her broad smile greeted in cordial welcome those who stopped at her window to chat, and there was nearly always some one at Pepsie's window. She was so happy, so bright, and so amiable that every one loved her, and she was the idol of all the children in the neighborhood — not, however, because she was liberal with pecans. Oh, no; with Pepsie, business was business, and pecans cost money, and every ten sugared pecans meant a nickel for her mother; but they loved to stand around the window, outside the iron railing, and watch Pepsie at her work. They liked to see her with her pile of nuts and bowl of foaming sugar before her. It seemed like magic, the way she would sugar them, and stick them together, and spread them out to dry on the clean white paper. She did it so rapidly that her long white fingers fairly flashed between the bowl of sugar, the pile of nuts, and the paper. And there always seemed just enough of each, therefore her just discrimination was a constant wonder.

When she finished her task, as she often did before dark, Tite Souris took away the bowl and the tray of sugared nuts, after Pepsie had counted them and put the number down in a little book, as much to protect herself against Tite Souris's depredations as to know the exact amount of their stock in trade; then she would open the little drawer in the table, and take out a prayer-book, a piece of needle-work, and a pack of cards.

She was very pious, and read her prayers several times a day; after she put her prayer-book aside she usually devoted some time to her needle-work, for which she had a real talent; then, when she thought she had earned her recreation, she put away her work, spread out her cards, and indulged in an intricate game of solitaire. This was her passion; she was very systematic, and very conscientious; but if she ever purloined any time from her duties, it was that she

might engage in that fascinating game. She decided everything by it; whatever she wished to know, two games out of three would give her the answer, for or against.

Sometimes she looked like a little witch during a wicked incantation, as she hovered over the rows of cards, her face dark and brooding, her long, thin fingers darting here and there, silent, absorbed, almost breathless under the fatal spell of chance.

In this way she passed day after day, always industrious, always contented, and always happy. She was very comfortable in her snug little room, which was warm in winter and cool in summer, owing to the two high buildings adjoining; and although she was a cripple, and her lower limbs useless, she suffered little pain, unless she was moved roughly, or jarred in some way; and no one could be more carefully protected from discomfort than she was, for although she was over twelve, Madelon still treated her as if she were a baby. Every morning, before she left for the Rue Bourbon, she bathed and dressed the girl, and lifted her tenderly, with her strong arms, into her wheeled chair, where she drank her coffee, and ate her roll, as dainty as a little princess, for she was always exquisitely clean. In the summer she wore pretty little white sacks, with a bright bow of ribbon at the neck, and in winter her shrunken figure was clothed in warm, soft woolen.

Madelon did not sit out all day in rain and shine on Bourbon Street, and make cakes and pralines half the night, for anything else but to provide this crippled mite with every comfort. As I said before, the girl was her idol, and she had toiled day and night to gratify her every wish; and, as far as she knew, there was but one desire unsatisfied, and for the accomplishment of that she was working and saving little by little.

Once Pepsie had said that she would like to live in the country. All she knew of the country was what she had read in books, and

what her mother, who had once seen the country, had told her. Often she closed her eyes to shut out the hot, narrow street, and thought of green valleys, with rivers running through them, and hills almost touching the sky, and broad fields shaded by great trees, and covered with waving grass and flowers. That was her one unrealized ideal,—her "Carcassonne," which she feared she was never to reach, except in imagination.

Chapter VII

THE ARRIVAL

On the other side of Good Children Street, and almost directly opposite Madelon's tiny cottage, was a double house of more pretentious appearance than those just around it. It was a little higher, the door was wider, and a good-sized window on each side had a small balcony, more for ornament than use, as it was scarcely wide enough to stand on. The roof projected well over the sidewalk, and there was some attempt at ornamentation in the brackets that supported it. At one side was a narrow yard with a stunted fig-tree, and a ragged rose-bush straggled up the posts of a small side-gallery.

This house had been closed for some time. The former tenant having died, his family, who were respectable, pleasant people, were obliged to leave it, much to Pepsie's sorrow, for she was always interested in her neighbors, and she had taken a great deal of pleasure in observing the ways of this household. Therefore she was very tired of looking at the closed doors and windows, and was constantly wishing that some one would take it. At last, greatly to her gratification, one pleasant morning, late in August, a middle-aged woman, very well dressed in black, who was lame and walked with a stick, a young man, and a lovely little girl, appeared on the scene, stopped before the empty house, and after looking at it with much interest mounted the steps, unlocked the door, and entered.

The child interested Pepsie at once. Although she had seen very few high-bred children in her short life, she noticed that this little

one was different from the small inhabitants of Good Children Street. Her white frock, black sash, and wide black hat had a certain grace uncommon in that quarter, and every movement and step had an elegant ease, very unlike the good-natured little creoles who played around Pepsie's window.

However, it was not only the child's beauty, her tasteful, pretty dress, and high-bred air that interested Pepsie; it was the pale, mournful little face, and the frail little figure, looking so wan and ill. The woman held her by the hand, and she walked very slowly and feebly; the robust, black-eyed young man carried a small basket, which the child watched constantly.

Pepsie could not remove her eyes from the house, so anxious was she to see the child again; but, instead of coming out, as she expected they would after they had looked at the house, much to her joy she saw the young man flinging open the shutters and doors, with quite an air of ownership; then she saw the woman take off her bonnet and veil, and the child's hat, and hang them on a hook near the window. Presently, the little girl came out on the small side-gallery with something in her arms. Pepsie strained her eyes, and leaned forward as far as her lameness would allow her in order to see what the child had.

"It 's a cat; no, it 's a dog; no, it is n't. Why, it must be a bird. I can see it flutter its wings. Yes, it 's a bird, a large, strange-looking bird. I wonder what it is!" And Pepsie, in her excitement and undue curiosity, almost tipped out of her chair, while the child looked around her with a listless, uninterested air, and then sat down on the step, hugging the bird closely and stroking its feathers.

"Certainly, they 've come to stay," said Pepsie to herself, "or they would n't open all the windows, and take off their things. Oh, I wonder if they have; I 'll just get my cards, and find out."

But Pepsie's oracle was doomed to remain silent, for, before she got them spread on the table, there was a rumbling of wheels in the street, and a furniture-wagon, pretty well loaded, drove up to the door. Pepsie swept her cards into the drawer, and watched it unload with great satisfaction.

At the same moment, the active Tite Souris entered like a whirlwind, her braids of wool sticking up, and her face all eyes and teeth. She had been out on the *banquette*, and was bursting with news.

"Oh, Miss Peps', Miss Peps', sum un's done tuk dat house ov' yon'er, an' is a-movin' in dis ver' minit. It 's a woman an' a boy, an' a littl' yaller gal. I means a littl' gal wid yaller ha'r all ove' her, an' she got a littl' long-legged goslin', a-huggin' it up like she awful fond uv it."

"Oh, stop, Tite; go away to your work," cried Pepsie, too busy to listen to her voluble handmaid. "Don't I see them without your telling me. You 'd better finish scouring your kitchen, or mama 'll get after you when she comes home."

"Shore 'nuff, I 'se a-scourin', Miss Peps', an' I 'se jes a dyin tu git out on dat *banquette;* dat *banquette* 's a-spilin' might' bad ter be cleaned. Let me do dat *banquette* right now, Miss Peps', an' I 'se gwine scour lak fury bymeby."

"Very well, Tite; go and do the *banquette*," returned Pepsie, smiling indulgently. "But mind what I say about the kitchen, when mama comes."

Such an event as some one moving in Good Children Street was very uncommon. Pepsie thought every one had lived there since the flood, and she did n't blame Tite Souris to want to be out with the other idle loungers to see what was going on, although she understood the *banquette* ruse perfectly.

At last all the furniture was carried in, and with it two trunks so large for that quarter as to cause no little comment.

"*Par exemple!*" said Monsieur Fernandez, "what a size for a trunk! That madame yonder must have traveled much in the North. I 've heard they use them there for ladies' toilets."

And, straightway, madame acquired greater importance from the conclusion that she had traveled extensively.

Then the wagon went away, the door was discreetly "bowed," and the loungers dispersed; but Pepsie, from her coign of vantage, still watched every movement of the new-comers. She saw Raste come out with a basket, and she was sure that he had gone to market. She saw madame putting up a pretty lace curtain at one window, and she was curious to know if she intended to have a parlor. Only one blind was thrown open; the other was "bowed" all day, yet she was positive that some one was working behind it. "That must be madame's room," she thought; "that big boy will have the back room next to the kitchen, and the little girl will sleep with madame, so the room on this side, with the pretty curtain, will be the parlor. I wonder if she will have a carpet, and a console, with vases of wax-flowers on it, and a cabinet full of shells, and a sofa." This was Pepsie's idea of a parlor; she had seen a parlor once long ago, and it was like this.

So she wondered and speculated all day; and all day the pale, sorrowful child sat alone on the side-gallery, holding her bird in her arms; and when night came, Pepsie had not sugared her pecans, neither had she read her prayers, nor even played one game of solitaire; but Madelon did not complain of her idleness. It was seldom the child had such a treat, and even Tite Souris escaped a scolding, in consideration of the great event.

The next morning Pepsie was awake very early, and so anxious was she to get to the window that she could hardly wait to be dressed. When she first looked across the street, the doors and shutters were closed, but some one had been stirring; and Tite

Souris informed her, when she brought her coffee, that madame had been out at "sun up," and had cleaned and "bricked" the *banquette* her own self.

"Then I 'm afraid she is n't rich," said Pepsie, "because if she was rich, she 'd keep a servant, and perhaps after all she won't have a parlor."

Presently there was a little flutter behind the bowed blind, and lo! it was suddenly flung open, and there, right in the middle of the window, hung a very tasty gilt frame, surrounding a white center, on which was printed, in red and gilt letters, "*Blanchisseuse de fin, et confections de toute sorte*," and underneath, written in Raste's boldest hand and best English, "Fin Washun dun hear, an notuns of al sort," and behind the sign Pepsie could plainly see a flutter of laces and muslins, children's dainty little frocks and aprons, ladies' collars, cuffs, and neckties, handkerchiefs and sacks, and various other articles for feminine use and adornment; and on a table, close to the window, were boxes of spools, bunches of tape, cards of buttons, skeins of wool, rolls of ribbons; in short, an assortment of small wares, which presented quite an attractive appearance; and, hovering about them, madame could be discerned, in her black skirt and fresh white sack, while, as smiling and self-satisfied as ever, she arranged her stock to the best advantage, and waited complacently for the customers who she was sure would come.

For the first time since the death of the young widow in Gretna, she breathed freely, for she began to feel some security in her new possessions. At last, everything had turned out as Raste predicted, and she had worked her plans well. The young mother, sleeping in the Bergeron tomb, could never testify against her, and the child was too young to give any but the most sketchy information about herself. She did not even know the name of her parents, and since her recovery from the fever she seemed to have forgotten a great deal that she

knew before. Her illness had left her in a pitiable condition; she was weak and dull, and did not appear to care for anything but the blue heron, which was her constant companion. Whether she was conscious of her great loss, and was mourning for her mother, madame could not decide. At first, she had asked constantly for her, and madame had told her kindly, and with caresses, which were not returned, that her mother had gone away for a while, and had left her with her *Tante* Pauline; and that she must be a good little girl, and love her *Tante* Pauline, while her mother was away.

Lady Jane looked at madame's bland face with such solemnly scrutinizing eyes, that she almost made her blush for the falsehood she was telling, but said nothing; her little thoughts and memories were very busy, and very far away; she had not forgotten as much as madame fancied she had, neither did she believe as much as madame thought she did. Whatever of doubt or regret passed through her little brain, she made no sign, but remained quiet and docile; she never laughed, and seldom cried; she was very little trouble, and scarcely noticed anything that was going on around her. In fact, she was stupefied and subdued, by the sudden misfortunes that had come upon her, until she seemed a very different being from the bright spirited child of a few weeks before.

Chapter VIII

LADY JANE FINDS A FRIEND

From the first, madame had insisted that the stranger's property should not be meddled with until a certain time had passed.

"We must wait," she said to the eager and impulsive Raste, "to see if she is missed, and advertised for. A person of her position must have friends somewhere, and it would be rather bad for us if she was traced here, and it was found out that she died in our house; we might even be suspected of killing her to get her money. Detectives are capable of anything, and it is n't best to get in their clutches; but if we don't touch her things, they can't accuse us, and Dr. Debrot knows she died of fever, so I would be considered a kind-hearted Christian woman, and I 'd be paid well for all my trouble, if it should come out that she died here."

These arguments had their weight with Raste, who, though thoroughly unscrupulous, was careful about getting into the toils of the law, his father's fate serving as an example to him of the difficulty of escaping from those toils when they once close upon a victim.

If at that time they had noticed the advertisement in the journals signed "Blue Heron," it would have given them a terrible fright; but they seldom read the papers, and before they thought of looking for a notice of the missing woman and child, it had been withdrawn.

For several weeks Raste went regularly to the grocery on the levee, and searched over the daily papers until his eyes ached; but in vain; among all the singular advertisements and "personals," there was nothing that referred in any way to the subject that interested him.

Therefore, after some six weeks had passed, madame deemed that it was safe to begin to cover her tracks, as Raste had advised with more force than elegance. The first thing to do was to move into another neighborhood; for that reason, she selected the house in Good Children Street, it being as far away from her present residence as she could possibly get, without leaving the city altogether.

At first she was tempted to give up work, and live like a lady for a while; then she considered that her sudden wealth might arouse suspicion, and she decided to carry on her present business, with the addition of a small stock of fancy articles to sell on which she could make a snug little profit, and at the same time give greater importance and respectability to her humble calling.

Among the dead woman's effects was the pocket-book, containing five hundred dollars, which she had secreted from Raste. From the money in the traveling bag she had paid the humble funeral expenses, and Dr. Debrot's modest bill, and there still remained some for other demands; but besides the money there were many valuables, the silver toilet articles, jewelry, laces, embroideries, and the handsome wardrobe of both mother and child. In one of the trunks she found a writing-case full of letters written in English. From these letters she could have learned all that it was necessary to know; but she could not read English readily, especially writing; she was afraid to show them, and she feared to keep them; therefore she thought it best to destroy them. So one night, when she was alone, she burned them all in the kitchen stove; not, however, without some misgivings and some qualms of conscience, for at the moment when she saw

them crumbling to white ashes the gentle face of the dead woman seemed to come before her, and her blue eyes to look at her sadly and reproachfully.

Then she thought of Father Ducros, so stern and severe, he had but little mercy or charity for those who sinned deliberately and wilfully, as she was doing. She would never dare to go to him, and what would become of her soul? Already she was beginning to feel that the way of the transgressor is hard; but she silenced the striving of conscience with specious arguments. She had not sought the temptation,—it had come to her, in the form of a dying woman; she had done her best by her, and now the child was thrown on her and must be cared for. She did not know the child's name, so she could not restore her to her friends, even if she had any; it was not likely that she had, or they would have advertised for her; and she meant to be good to the little thing. She would take care of her, and bring her up well. She should be a daughter to her. Surely that was better than sending her to a home for foundlings, as another would do. In this way she persuaded herself that she was really an honest, charitable woman, who was doing what was best for the child by appropriating her mother's property, and destroying every proof of her identity.

From the child's wardrobe she selected the plainest and most useful articles for daily wear, laying aside the finest and daintiest to dispose of as her business might offer opportunity; and from the mother's clothes she also made a selection, taking for her own use what she considered plain enough to wear with propriety, while the beautiful linen, fine laces, and pretty little trifles went a long way in furnishing her show-window handsomely.

Notwithstanding her assurance, she felt some misgivings when she placed those pretty, dainty articles in the broad light of day before an observing public,—and not only the public terrified her,

but the child also; suppose she should recognize her mother's property, and make a scene. Therefore it was with no little anxiety that she waited the first morning for Lady Jane's appearance in the little shop.

After a while she came in, heavy-eyed, pale, listless, and carelessly dressed, her long silken hair uncombed, her little feet and legs bare, and her whole manner that of a sorrowful, neglected child. She carried her bird in her arms, as usual, and was passing out of the side-door to the little yard, without as much as a glance, when madame, who was watching her furtively, said to her in rather a fretful tone:

"Come here, child, and let me button your clothes. And you have n't brushed your hair; now this won't do; you 're old enough to dress yourself, and you must do it; I can't wait on you every minute, I 've got something else to do." Then she asked in a softer tone, while she smoothed the golden hair, "See my pretty window. Don't you think it looks very handsome?"

Lady Jane turned her heavy eyes toward the laces and fluttering things above her, then they slowly fell to the table, and suddenly, with a piercing cry, she seized a little jewel-box, an odd, pretty silver trinket that madame had displayed among her small wares, and exclaimed passionately: "That 's my mama's; it 's mama's, and you shan't have it," and turning, she rushed into madame's room, leaving Tony to flutter from her arms, while she held the little box tightly clasped to her bosom.

Madame did not notice her outbreak, neither did she attempt to take the box from her, so she carried it about with her all day; but at night, after the little one had fallen asleep, madame unclosed the fingers that still clung to it, and without a pang consigned it to obscurity.

"I must n't let her see that again," she said to herself. "Dear

me, what should I do, if she should act like that before a customer? I 'll never feel safe until everything is sold, and out of the way."

"Well, I declare, if that is n't the fifth customer Madame Jozain has had this morning," said Pepsie to Tite Souris, a few days after the new arrival. "She must be doing a good business, for they all buy; at least they all come out with paper parcels."

"An' jes' see dem chil'ren crowd 'roun' dat do. Lor', dey doant cum ter yer winner eny mo', Miss Peps'," said Tite, with an accent of disgust, as she brushed the pecan-shells from Pepsie's table. "Dey jes' stan' ober dar ter git a glimge uv dat dar goslin' de littl' gal holes all day. Po chile! she might' lunsum, setten dar all 'lone."

"Tite, oh, Tite, can't you coax her across the street? I want to see her near," cried Pepsie eagerly; "I want to see what kind of a bird that is."

"Dem chil'ren say how it 's a herin'. I doant believe dat — hit ain't no ways lak dem herin's in de sto, what dey has in pickl'. Sho! dat ain't no herin', hit 's a goslin'; I 'se done seen goslin's on de plantashun, an' hit 's a goslin', shore nuff."

"Well, I want to see for myself, Tite. Go there to the fence, and ask her to come here; tell her I 'll give her some pecans."

Tite went on her mission, and lingered so long, staring with the others, that her mistress had to call her back. She returned alone. Lady Jane declined to accept the invitation.

"'T ain't no use," said Tite energetically. "She wunt cum. She on'y hugs dat dar long-legged bird, an' looks at yer solum, lak a owel; 't ain't no use, she wunt cum. She might' stuck up, Miss Peps'. She say she doan't want peccuns. Ain't dat cur'ous? Oh, Lor, doan't want peccuns! Well, white chil'ren *is* der beatenes' chil'ren!" and Tite went to her work, muttering her surprise at the "cur'ousness" of white children in general, and Lady Jane in particular.

All day long Pepsie watched, hoping that the little girl might change her mind, and decide to be more neighborly; but she was doomed to disappointment. Near night, feeling that it was useless to hope and noticing that madame's customers were dropping off, she sought consolation in a game of solitaire.

Just as she was at the most exciting point, a slight rustling sound attracted her attention, and, looking up, she saw a little figure in a soiled white frock, with long yellow hair falling over her shoulders, and a thick, neglected bang almost touching her eyebrows. The little face was pale and sorrowful; but a faint smile dimpled the lips, and the eyes were bright and earnest. Lady Jane was holding the bird up in both hands over the iron railing, and when she caught Pepsie's surprised glance she said very politely and very sweetly:

"Would you like to see Tony?"

And that was the way in which Lady Jane and Pepsie first became acquainted.

Chapter IX

THE FIRST VISIT TO PEPSIE

When Pepsie first looked at Lady Jane, standing before her holding up the bird, with the light of the sunset on her yellow hair, and her lips parted in a smile that made even the solemn eyes bright, she felt as if she saw a visitor from another world.

For a moment, she could only look at her; then she found voice to say:

"I was afraid you would n't come. Tite said you would n't. I 've looked for you all day."

"I came to show Tony to you before I go to bed. I 'll hold him so you can see him." And Lady Jane stretched up on the tips of her little white toes to reach the bird above the railing.

"Wait a moment, I 'll have Tite open the door for you. Won't you come in?"

Tite, who heard Pepsie talking, was peeping through the kitchen-door, and in an instant she had pushed the bolt aside, and Lady Jane stood in the little room, and was looking around her with pleased surprise.

"Why, how nice!" she said, with a little sigh of content; "I 'm glad I came. Have you got a kitty?"

"A kitty? you mean a little cat," asked Pepsie, her face one broad smile over the child and bird. "No, I have n't one, and I 'm sorry."

Lady Jane had dropped Tony on the floor, holding him with a long string fastened to the leather band on his leg, while she looked over Pepsie's little, distorted figure with mingled curiosity and pity.

In the mean time, Pepsie and Tite were watching the bird with the closest attention, while he hopped about, not very gracefully, picking grains of brick-dust from the cracks of the floor.

At last Tite, unable to control her wonder and admiration, broke forth:

"Miss Peps', jes look at he. Ain't he the cur'ousest bird y' ever seed? An' he ain't no goslin', shore nuff; jes look at he tail feaders; jes lak dem feaders on Mam'selle Marie's hat."

"And he knows when I speak to him," said Lady Jane, lifting her lovely eyes to Pepsie. "Now I 'll call him, and you 'll see him come."

Then she chirruped softly, and called "Tony, Tony." The bird turned his bright eyes on her, and with a fluttering run he hurried to her.

"Oh, oh!" cried Pepsie, quite overcome with surprise. "Is n't he knowing! I never saw such a bird. Is he a wild bird?"

"No, he 's very tame, or he 'd fly away," replied Lady Jane, looking at him fondly. "He 's a blue heron; no one has a bird like him."

"A blue heron!" repeated Pepsie wonderingly. "I never heard of such a bird."

"Did n't I done tole yer dem chil'ren say he a herin', an' he ain't no herin'?" interrupted Tite, determined to support her assertion as to her knowledge of the difference between fish and fowl. "I tole yer, Miss Peps', how herin's fish, an' he a bird, shore nuff." And, unable to repress her mirth at the oddity of the name, she burst into a loud laugh of derision.

Lady Jane looked hurt and surprised, and, stooping for Tony, she gathered him up and turned toward the door.

"Oh, don't go, please don't!" pleaded Pepsie. "Tite, stop laughing, and put a chair for the little girl, and then go to your work."

Tite obeyed reluctantly, with many a grin and backward look, and Lady Jane, after lingering a moment at the door, shy and undecided, put Tony down again, and climbed into the chair on the opposite side of the table.

"Now that darky 's gone," said Pepsie, with a gaiety that was reassuring, "we can talk sense. Do you understand me, everything I say? You know I don't speak English very well."

"Oh, yes!" answered Lady Jane; "I know what you say, and I like you."

"I 'm glad of that," said Pepsie brightly, "because I 've been just crazy to have you come over here. Now tell me, is Madame Jozain your aunt or your grandma?"

"Why, she 's my Tante Pauline; that 's all," replied the child indifferently.

"Do you love her dearly?" asked Pepsie, who was something of a little diplomat.

"No, I don't love her," said Lady Jane decidedly.

"Oh my! Why, is n't she good to you?"

Lady Jane made no reply, but looked wistfully at Pepsie, as if she would rather not express her opinion on the subject.

"Well, never mind. I guess she 's kind to you, only perhaps you miss your ma. Has she gone away?" And Pepsie lowered her voice and spoke very softly; she felt that she was treading on delicate ground, but she so wanted to know all about the dear little thing, not so much from curiosity as from the interest she felt in her.

Lady Jane did not reply, and Pepsie again asked very gently:

"Has your mama gone away?"

"Tante Pauline says so," replied the child, as the woe-begone expression settled on her little face again. "She says mama 's gone away, and that she 'll come back. I think she 's gone to heaven to see papa. You know papa went to heaven before we left the ranch—and mama got tired waiting for him to come back, and so she 's gone to see him; but I *wish* she 'd taken me with her. I want to see papa too, and I don't like to wait so long."

The soft, serious little voice fell to a sigh, and she looked solemnly out of the window at the strip of sunset sky over Madame Jozain's house.

Pepsie's great eyes filled with tears, and she turned away her head to hide them.

"Heaven 's somewhere up there, is n't it?" she continued, pointing upward. "Every night when the stars come out, I watch to see if papa and mama are looking at me. I think they like to stay up there, and don't want to come back, and perhaps they 've forgotten all about Lady Jane."

"Lady Jane, is that your name? Why, how pretty!" said Pepsie, trying to speak brightly; "and what a little darling you are! I don't think any one would ever forget you, much less your papa and mama. Don't get tired waiting; you 're sure to see them again, and you need n't to be lonesome, sitting there on the gallery every day alone. While your aunt 's busy with her customers, you can come over here with your bird, and sit with me. I 'll show you how to shell pecans and sugar them, and I 'll read some pretty stories to you. And oh, I 'll teach you to play solitaire."

"What is solitaire?" asked Lady Jane, brightening visibly.

"It 's a game of cards," and Pepsie nodded toward the table; "I was playing when you came. It 's very amusing. Now tell me about your bird. Where did you get him?"

"A boy gave him to me — a nice boy. It was on the cars, and mama said I could have him; that was before mama's dear head ached so. It ached so, she could n't speak afterward."

"And have n't you a doll?" interrupted Pepsie, seeing that the child was approaching dangerous ground.

"A doll? Oh yes, I 've got ever so many at the ranch; but I have n't any here. Tante Pauline promised me one, but she has n't got it yet."

"Well, never mind; I 'll make you one; I make lovely dolls for my little cousins, the Paichoux. I must tell you about the Paichoux. There is Uncle Paichoux, and Tante Modeste, and Marie, the eldest,— she has taken her first communion, and goes to balls,— and then there is Tiburce, a big boy, and Sophie and Nanette, and a lot of little ones, all good, pleasant children, so healthy and so happy. Uncle Paichoux is a dairyman; they live on Frenchman Street, way, way down where it is like the country, and they have a big house, a great deal larger than any house in this neighborhood, with a garden, and figs and peaches, and lovely pomegranates that burst open when they are ripe, and Marie has roses and crape myrtle and jasmine. It is lovely there — just lovely. I went there once, long ago, before my back hurt me so much."

"Does your back hurt you now?" interrupted Lady Jane, diverted from the charming description of the Paichoux home by sudden sympathy for the speaker.

"Yes, sometimes; you see how crooked it is. It 's all grown out, and I can't bear to be jolted; that 's why I never go anywhere; besides, I can't walk," added Pepsie, feeling a secret satisfaction in enumerating her ills. "But it 's my back; my back 's the worst."

"What ails it?" asked Lady Jane, with the deepest sympathy in her grave little voice.

"I 've got a spine in my back, and the doctor says I 'll never get over it. It 's something when you once get it that you can't be cured of, and it 's mighty bad; but I 've got used to it now," and she smiled at Lady Jane; a smile full of patience and resignation. "I was n't always so bad," she went on cheerfully, "before papa died. You see papa was a fireman, and he was killed in a fire when I was very small; but before that he used to take me out in his arms, and sometimes I used to go out in Tante Modeste's milk-cart — such a pretty cart, painted red, and set up on two high wheels, and in front there are two great cans, as tall as you are, and they shine like silver, and little measures hang on the spouts where the milk comes out, and over the seat is a top just like a buggy top, which they put up when the sun is too hot, or it rains. Oh, it 's just beautiful to sit up on that high seat, and go like the wind! I remember how it felt on my face," and Pepsie leaned back and closed her eyes in ecstasy, "and then the milk! When I was thirsty, Tante Modeste would give me a cup of milk out of the big can, and it was so sweet and fresh. Some day I 'm sure she 'll take you, and then you 'll know how it all was; but I don't think I shall ever go again, because I can't bear the jolting; and besides," said Pepsie, with a very broad smile of satisfaction, "I 'm so well off here; I can see everything, and everybody, so I don't mind; and then I 've been once, and know just what it 's like to go fast with the wind in my face."

"I used to ride on my pony with papa," began Lady Jane, her memory of the past awakened by the description of Pepsie's drive. "My pony was named Sunflower, now I remember," and her little face grew radiant, and her eyes sparkled with joy; "papa used to put me on Sunflower, and mama was afraid I 'd fall." Then the brief glow faded out of her face, for she heard Madame Jozain call across the street, "Lady! Lady! Come, child, come. It 's nearly dark, and time you were in bed."

With touching docility, and without the least hesitation, she gathered up Tony, who was standing on one leg under her chair, and, holding up her face for Pepsie to kiss, she said good-by.

"And you 'll come again in the morning," cried Pepsie, hugging her fondly; "you 'll be sure to come in the morning."

And Lady Jane said yes.

Chapter X

LADY JANE FINDS OTHER FRIENDS

Thus Lady Jane's new life, in the quaint old Rue des Bons Enfants, began under quite pleasant auspices. From the moment that Pepsie, with a silent but not unrecorded vow, constituted herself the champion and guardian angel of the lonely little stranger, she was surrounded by friends, and hedged in with the most loyal affection.

Because Pepsie loved the child, the good Madelon loved her also, and although she saw her but seldom, being obliged to leave home early and return late, she usually left her some substantial token of good will, in the shape of cakes or pralines, or some odd little toy that she picked up on Bourbon Street on her way to and from her stand.

Madelon was a pleasant-faced, handsome woman, always clean and always cheery; no matter how hard the day had been for her, whether hot or cold, rainy or dusty, she returned home at night as fresh and cheerful as when she went out in the morning. Pepsie adored her mother, and no two human beings were ever happier than they when the day's work was over, and they sat down together to their little supper.

Then Pepsie recounted to her mother everything that had happened during the day, or at least everything that had come within her line of vision as she sat at her window; and Madelon in turn would tell her of all she had heard out in her world, the world of the Rue Bourbon, and after the advent of Lady Jane the child was a constant theme of conversation between them. Her

beauty, her intelligence, her pretty manners, her charming little ways were a continual wonder to the homely woman and girl, who had seen little beyond their own sphere of life.

If Madelon was fortunate enough to get home early, she always found Lady Jane with Pepsie, and the loving way with which the child would spring to meet her, clinging to her neck and nestling to her broad motherly bosom, showed how deeply she needed the maternal affection so freely lavished upon her.

At first Madame Jozain affected to be a little averse to such a close intimacy, and even went so far as to say to Madame Fernandez, the tobacconist's wife, who sat all day with her husband in his little shop rolling cigarettes and selling lottery tickets, that she did not like her niece to be much with the lame girl opposite, whose mother was called "Bonne Praline." Perhaps they were honest people, and would do the child no harm; but a woman who was never called madame, and who sat all day on the Rue Bourbon, was likely to have the manners of the streets. And Lady Jane had never been thrown with such people; she had been raised very carefully, and she did n't want her to lose her pretty manners.

Madame Fernandez agreed that Madelon was not over-refined, and that Pepsie lacked the accomplishments of a young lady. "But they are very honest," she said, "and the girl has a generous heart, and is so patient and cheerful; besides, Madelon has a sister who is rich. Monsieur Paichoux, her sister's husband, is very well off, a solid man, with a large dairy business; and their daughter Marie, who just graduated at the Sacred Heart, is very pretty, and is *fiancée* to a young man of superior family, a son of Judge Guiot, and you know who the Guiots are."

Yes, madame knew. Her father, Pierre Bergeron, and Judge Guiot had always been friends, and the families had visited in other days. If that was the case, the Paichoux must be very respectable;

and if "Bonne Praline" was the sister-in-law of a Paichoux, and prospective aunt-in-law to the son of a judge, there was no reason why she should keep the child away; therefore she allowed her to go whenever she wished, which was from the time she was out of bed in the morning until it was quite dark at night.

Lady Jane shared Pepsie's meals, and sat at the table with her, learning to crack and shell pecans with such wonderful facility that Pepsie's task was accomplished some hours sooner, therefore she had a good deal of time each day to devote to her little friend. And it was very amusing to witness Pepsie's motherly care for the child. She bathed her, and brushed her long silken hair; she trimmed her bang to the most becoming length; she dressed her with the greatest taste, and tied her sash with the *chic* of a French milliner; she examined the little pink nails and pearls of teeth to see if they were perfectly clean, and she joined with Lady Jane in rebelling against madame's decree that the child should go barefoot while the weather was warm. "All the little creoles did, and she was not going to buy shoes for the child to knock out every day." Therefore, when her shoes were worn, Madelon bought her a neat little pair on the Rue Bourbon, and Pepsie darned her stockings and sewed on buttons and strings with the most exemplary patience. When madame complained that, with all the business she had to attend to, the white frocks were too much trouble and expense to keep clean, Tite Souris, who was a fair laundress, begged that she might be allowed to wash them, which she did with such goodwill that Lady Jane was always neat and dainty.

Gradually the sorrowful, neglected look disappeared from her small face, and she became rosy and dimpled again, and as contented and happy a child as ever was seen in Good Children Street. Every one in the neighborhood knew her; the gracious, beautiful little creature, with her blue heron, became one of the sights of the quarter.

She was a picture and a poem in one to the homely, good-natured creoles, and everywhere she went she carried sunshine with her.

MR. GEX AT THE DOOR OF HIS SHOP.

Little Gex, a tiny, shrunken, bent Frenchman, who kept a small fruit and vegetable stall just above Madelon's, felt that the day had

been dark indeed when Lady Jane's radiant little face did not illume his dingy quarters. How his old, dull eyes would brighten when he heard her cheery voice, "Good morning, Mr. Gex; Tante Pauline" —or Pepsie, as the case might be—"would like a nickel of apples, onions, or carrots"; and the orange that was always given her for *lagniappe* was received with a charming smile, and a "Thank you," that went straight to the old, withered heart.

Gex was a quiet, polite little man, who seldom held any conversation with his customers beyond the simple requirements of his business; and children, as a general thing, he detested, for the reason that the ill-bred little imps in the neighborhood made him the butt of their mischievous ridicule, for his appearance was droll in the extreme: his small face was destitute of beard and as wrinkled as a withered apple, and he usually wore a red handkerchief tied over his bald head with the ends hanging under his chin; his dress consisted of rather short and very wide trousers, a little jacket, and an apron that reached nearly to his feet. This very quaint costume gave him a nondescript appearance, which excited the mirth of the juvenile population to such a degree that they did not always restrain it within proper bounds. Therefore it was very seldom that a child entered his den, and such a thing as one receiving *lagniappe* was quite unheard of.

All day long he sat on his small wooden chair behind the shelf across his window, on which was laid in neat piles oranges, apples, sweet potatoes, onions, cabbages, and even the odorous garlic; they were always sound and clean, and for that reason, even if he did not give *lagniappe* to small customers, he had a fair trade in the neighborhood. And he was very neat and industrious. When he was not engaged in preparing his vegetables, he was always tinkering at something of interest to himself; he could mend china and glass, clocks and jewelry, shoes and shirts; he washed and patched his

own wardrobe, and darned his own stockings. Often when a customer came in he would push his spectacles upon his forehead, lay down his stocking and needle, and deal out his cabbage and carrots as unconcernedly as if he had been engaged in a more manly occupation.

From some of the dingy corners of his den he had unearthed an old chair, very stiff and high, and entirely destitute of a bottom; this he cleaned and repaired by nailing across the frame an orange-box cover decorated with a very bright picture, and one day he charmed Lady Jane by asking her to sit down and eat her orange while he mended his jacket.

She declined eating her orange, as she always shared it with Pepsie, but accepted the invitation to be seated. Placing Tony to forage on a basket of refuse vegetables, she climbed into the chair, placed her little heels on the topmost rung, smoothed down her short skirt, and, resting her elbows on her knees, leaned her rosy little cheeks on her palms, and set herself to studying Gex seriously and critically. At length, her curiosity overcoming her diffidence, she said in a very polite tone, but with a little hesitation: "Mr. Gex, are you a man or a woman?"

Gex, for the moment, was fairly startled out of himself, and, perhaps for the first time in years, he threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"*Bon! bon!* 'T is good; 't is vairy good. Vhy, my leetle lady, sometime I don't know myself; 'cause, you see, I have to be both the man and the voman; but vhy in the vorld did you just ask me such a funny question?"

"Because, Mr. Gex," replied Lady Jane, very gravely, "I 've thought about it often. Because — men don't sew, and wear aprons,—and — women don't wear trousers; so, you see, I could n't tell which *you* were."

"Oh, *ma foi!*" and again Gex roared with laughter until a neighbor, who was passing, thought he had gone crazy, and stopped to look at him with wonder; but she only saw him leaning back, laughing with all his might, while Lady Jane sat looking at him with a frowning, flushed face, as if she was disgusted at his levity.

"I don't know why you laugh so," she said loftily, straightening up in her chair, and regarding Gex as if he had disappointed her. "I think it 's very bad for you to have no one to mend your clothes, and — and to have to sew like a woman, if — if you 're a man."

"Vhy, bless your leetle heart, so it is; but you see I am just one poor, lonely *creature*, and it don't make much difference vhether I 'm one or t' other; nobody cares now."

"I do," returned Lady Jane brightly; "and I 'm glad I know, because, when Pepsie teaches me to sew, *I 'm* going to mend your clothes, Mr. Gex."

"Vell, you are one leetle angel," exclaimed Gex, quite overcome. "Here, take another orange."

"Oh, no; thank you. I 've only bought one thing, and I can't take two *lagniappes;* that would be wrong. But I must go now."

And, jumping down, she took Tony from his comfortable nest among the cabbage-leaves, and with a polite good-by she darted out, leaving the dingy little shop darker for her going.

For a long time after she went Gex sat looking thoughtfully at his needlework. Then he sighed heavily, and muttered to himself: "If Marie had lived! If she 'd lived, I 'd been more of a man."

Chapter XI

THE VISIT TO THE PAICHOUX

One bright morning in October, while Pepsie and Lady Jane were very busy over their pecans, there was a sudden rattling of wheels and jingling of cans, and Tante Modeste's milk-cart, gay in a fresh coat of red paint, with the shining cans, and smart little mule in a bright harness, drew up before the door, and Tante Modeste herself jumped briskly down from the high seat, and entered like a fresh breath of spring.

She and Madelon were twin sisters, and very much alike; the same large, fair face, the same smooth, dark hair combed straight back from the forehead, and twisted in a glossy knot at the back, and like Madelon she wore a stiffly starched, light calico gown, finished at the neck with a muslin scarf tied in a large bow; her head was bare, and in her ears she wore gold hoops, and around her neck was a heavy chain of the same precious metal.

When Pepsie saw her she held out her arms, flushing with pleasure, and cried joyfully: "Oh, Tante Modeste, how glad I am! I thought you 'd forgotten to come for Lady Jane."

Tante Modeste embraced her niece warmly, and then caught Lady Jane to her heart just as Madelon did. "Forgotten her? Oh, no; I 've thought of her all the time since I was here; but I 've been so busy."

"What about, Tante Modeste?" asked Pepsie eagerly.

"Oh, you can't think how your cousin Marie is turning us upside down, since she decided to be a lady." Here Tante Modeste made

a little grimace of disdain. "She must have our house changed, and her papa can't say 'no' to her. I like it best as it was, but Marie must have paint and carpets; think of it — carpets! But I draw the line at the parlor — the *salon*," and again Tante Modeste shrugged and laughed. "She wants a *salon;* well, she shall have a *salon* just as she likes it, and I will have the other part of the house as I like it. Just imagine, your uncle has gone on Rue Royale, and bought a mirror, a console, a cabinet, a sofa, and a carpet."

"Oh, oh, Tante Modeste, how lovely!" cried Pepsie, clasping her hands in admiration. "I wish I could see the parlor just once."

"You shall, my dear; you shall, if you have to be brought on a bed. When there 's a wedding,"— and she nodded brightly, as much as to say, "and there will be one soon,"— "you shall be brought there. I 'll arrange it so you can come comfortably, my dear. Have patience, you shall come."

"How good you are, Tante Modeste," cried Pepsie, enraptured at the promise of such happiness.

"But now, *chérie*," she said, turning to Lady Jane, whose little face was expressing in pantomime her pleasure at Pepsie's delight, "I 've come for you this morning to take you a ride in the cart, as I promised."

"Tante Pauline does n't know," began Lady Jane dutifully. "I must go and ask her if I can."

"I 'll send Tite," cried Pepsie, eager to have the child enjoy what to her seemed the greatest pleasure on earth.

"Here, Tite," she said, as the black visage appeared at the door. "Run quick across to Madame Jozain, and ask if Miss Lady can go to ride in the milk-cart with Madame Paichoux; and bring me a clean frock and her hat and sash."

Tite flew like the wind, her black legs making zig-zag strokes across the street, while Pepsie brushed the child's beautiful hair until it shone like gold.

Madame Jozain did not object. Of course, a milk-cart was n't a carriage, but then Lady Jane was only a child, and it did n't matter.

TANTE MODESTE TAKES LADY JANE TO RIDE IN THE MILK-WAGON.

While Pepsie was putting the finishing touches to Lady Jane's toilet, Tante Modeste and Tite Souris were busy bringing various packages from the milk-cart to the little room; butter, cream, cheese, sausage, a piece of pig, and a fine capon. When Tante Modeste came, she always left a substantial proof of her visit.

There was only one drawback to Lady Jane's joy, and that was the necessity of leaving Tony behind.

"You might take him," said Tante Modeste, good-naturedly, "but there are so many young ones home they 'd pester the bird about to death, and something might happen to him; he might get away, and then you 'd never forgive us."

"I know I must n't take him," said Lady Jane, with sweet resignation. "Dear Tony, be a good bird while I 'm gone, and you shall have some bugs to-morrow." Tony was something of an epicure, and "bugs," as Lady Jane called them, extracted from cabbage-leaves, were a delight to him. Then she embraced him fondly, and fastened him securely to Pepsie's chair, and went away with many good-bys and kisses for her friend, and not a few lingering glances for her pet.

It was a perfectly enchanting situation to Lady Jane when she was mounted up on the high seat, close under Tante Modeste's sheltering wing, with her little feet on the cream-cheese box, and the two tall cans standing in front like sturdy tin footmen waiting for orders. Then Tante Modeste pulled the top up over their heads, and shook her lines at the fat little mule, and away they clattered down Good Children Street, with all the children and all the dogs running on behind.

It was a long and delightful drive to Lady Jane before they got out of town to where the cottages were scattered and set in broad fields, with trees and pretty gardens. At length they turned out of the beautiful Esplanade, with its shady rows of trees, into Frenchman Street, and away down the river they stopped before a large double cottage that stood well back from the street, surrounded by trees and flowers; a good-natured, healthy-looking boy threw open the gate, and Tante Modeste clattered into the yard, calling out:

"Here, Tiburce, quick, my boy; unhitch the mule, and turn him out." The little animal understood perfectly well what she said, and shaking his long ears he nickered approvingly.

Lady Jane was lifted down from her high perch by Paichoux himself, who gave her a right cordial welcome, and in a moment she was surrounded by Tante Modeste's good-natured brood. At first she felt a little shy, there were so many, and they were such noisy children; but they were so kind and friendly toward her that they soon won her confidence and affection.

That day was a "red-letter day" to Lady Jane; she was introduced to all the pets of the farm-yard, the poultry, the dogs, the kittens, the calves, the ponies, and little colts, and the great soft motherly looking cows that stood quietly in rows to be milked; and afterward they played under the trees in the grass, while they gathered roses by the armful to carry to Pepsie, and filled a basket with pecans for Madelon.

She was feasted on gumbo, fried chicken, rice-cakes, and delicious cream cheese until she could eat no more; she was caressed and petted to her heart's content from the pretty Marie down to the smallest white-headed Paichoux; she saw the fine parlor, the mirror, the pictures, the cabinet of shells, and the vases of wax-flowers, and, to crown all, Paichoux himself lifted her on Tiburce's pony and rode her around the yard several times, while Tante Modeste made her a beautiful cake, frosted like snow, with her name in pink letters across the top.

At last, when the milk-cart came around with its evening load of fresh milk for waiting customers, Lady Jane was lifted up again beside Tante Modeste, overloaded with presents, caresses, and good wishes, the happiest child, as well as the tiredest, that ever rode in a milk-cart.

Long before they reached the noisy city streets, Lady Jane became very silent, and Tante Modeste peeped under the broad

hat to see if she had fallen asleep; but no, the blue eyes were wide and wistful, and the little face had lost its glow of happiness.

"Are you tired, *chérie?*" asked Tante Modeste kindly.

"No, thank you," she replied, with a soft sigh. "I was thinking of papa, and Sunflower, and the ranch, and dear mama. Oh, I wonder if she 'll come back soon."

Tante Modeste made no reply, but she fell to thinking too. There was something strange about it all that she could n't understand.

The child's remarks and Madame Jozain's stories did not agree. There was a mystery, and she meant to get at the bottom of it by some means. And when Tante Modeste set out to accomplish a thing she usually succeeded.

Chapter XII

TANTE MODESTE'S SUSPICIONS

"PAICHOUX," said Tante Modeste to her husband, that same night, before the tired dairyman went to bed; "I 've been thinking of something all the evening."

"*Vraiment!* I 'm surprised," returned Paichoux facetiously; "I did n't know you ever wasted time thinking."

"I don't usually," went on Tante Modeste, ignoring her husband's little attempt at pleasantry; "but really, papa, this thing is running through my head constantly. It 's about that little girl of Madame Jozain's; there 's something wrong about the *ménage* there. That child is no more a Jozain than I am. A Jozain, indeed! — she 's a little aristocrat, if ever there was one, a born little lady."

"Perhaps she 's a Bergeron," suggested Paichoux, with a quizzical smile. "Madame prides herself on being a Bergeron, and the Bergerons are fairly decent people. Old Bergeron, the baker, was an honest man."

"That may be; but she is n't a Bergeron, either. That child is different, you can see it. Look at her beside our young ones. Why, she 's a swan among geese."

"Well, that happens naturally sometimes," said the philosophic Paichoux. "I 've seen it over and over in common breeds. It 's an accident, but it happens. In a litter of curs, there 'll be often one stylish dog; the puppies 'll grow up together; but there 'll be one different from the others, and the handsomest one may not be the smartest, but he 'll be the master, and get the best of every-

thing. Now look at that black filly of mine; where did she get her style? Not from either father or mother. It 's an accident—an accident,—and it may be with children as it is with puppies and colts, and that little one may be an example of it."

"*Nonsense*, Paichoux!" said Tante Modeste sharply. "There 's no accident about it; there 's a mystery, and Madame Jozain does n't tell the truth when she talks about the child. I can feel it even when she does n't contradict herself. The other day I stepped in there to buy Marie a ribbon, and I spoke about the child; in fact, I asked which side she came from, and madame answered very curtly that her father was a Jozain. Now this is what set me to thinking: To-day, when Pepsie was putting a clean frock on the child, I noticed that her underclothing was marked 'J. C.' Remember, J. C. Well, the day that I was in madame's shop, she said to me in her smooth way that she 'd heard of Marie's intended marriage, and that she had something superior, exquisite, that she 'd like to show me. Then she took a box out of her *armoire*, and in it were a number of the most beautiful sets of linen I ever saw, *batiste* as fine as cobwebs and real lace. 'They 're just what you need for *mademoiselle*,' she said in her wheedling tone; 'since she 's going to marry into such a distinguished family, you 'll want to give her the best.'

"'They 're too fine for my daughter,' I answered, as I turned them over and examined them carefully. They were the handsomest things!—and on every piece was a pretty little embroidered monogram, J. C.; mind you, the same as the letters on the child's clothes. Then I asked her right out, for it 's no use mincing matters with such a woman, where in the world she got such lovely linen.

"'They belonged to my niece,' she said, with a hypocritical sigh, 'and I 'd like to sell them; they 're no good to the child; before

she 's grown up they 'll be spoiled with damp and mildew; I 'd rather have the money to educate her.'

" ' But the monogram; it 's a pity they 're marked J. C.' I repeated the letters over to see what she would say, and as I live she was ready for me.

" ' No, madame; it 's C. J.—Claire Jozain; her name was Claire, you 're looking at it wrong, and really it don't matter much how the letters are placed, for they 're always misleading, you never know which comes first; and, dear Madame Paichoux,'—she *deared* me, and that made me still more suspicious,—' don't you see that the C might easily be mistaken for G?—and no one will notice the J, it looks so much like a part of the vine around it. I 'll make them a bargain if you 'll take them.'

" I told her no, that they were too fine for my girl; *par exemple!* as if I 'd let Marie wear stolen clothes, perhaps."

" Hush, hush, Modeste!" exclaimed Paichoux; "you might get in the courts for that."

" Or get *her* there, which would be more to the purpose. I 'd like to know when and where that niece died, and who was with her; besides, the child says such strange things, now and then, that they set one to thinking. To-day when I was taking her home, she began to talk about the ranch, and her papa and mama. Sometimes I think they 've stolen her."

" Oh, Modeste! The woman is n't as bad as that; I 've never heard anything against *her*," interrupted the peaceable Paichoux, "she 's got a bad son, it 's true. That boy, Raste, is his father over again. Why, I hear he 's already been in the courts; but *she 's* all right as far as I know."

" Well, we 'll see," said Tante Modeste, oracularly; "but I 'm not satisfied about that monogram. It was J. C., as sure as I live, and not C. J."

"I 'll tell you what we 'll do, mama," said Paichoux, after some deliberate thought, he was slow, but he was sure, "we 'll keep a watch on the little one, and if anything happens, I 'll stand by her. You tell sister Madelon to let me know if anything happens, and I 'll see her through all right."

"Then I believe she 's safe," said Tante Modeste proudly, "for every one knows that when Paichoux says a thing, he means it."

If Madam Jozain had only known how unfavorable were the comments of her supposed friends, she would not have felt as comfortable as she did. Although she was riding on the topmost wave of prosperity, as far as her business was concerned, she was not, as I said before, entirely happy unless she had the good opinion of every one, and for some reason, probably the result of a guilty conscience, she fancied that people looked askance at her; for, in spite of her polite advances, she had not succeeded in making friends of her neighbors. They came to her shop to chat and look, and sometimes to buy, and she was as civil to them as it was possible to be. She gave them her most comfortable chairs, and pulled down everything for them to examine, and unfolded, untied, and unpacked, only to have the trouble of putting them all away again. It was true they bought a good deal at times, and she had got rid of many of "those things" in a quiet way, and at fair prices; but still the neighbors kept her at a distance; they were polite enough, but they were not cordial, and it was cordiality, warmth, admiration, flattery, for which she hungered.

It was true she had a great deal to be proud of, for Raste was growing handsomer and more of a gentleman every day. He was the best looking fellow in the quarter, and he dressed so well,— like his father, he was large and showy,— and wore the whitest linen, the gayest neckties, and the finest jewelry, among which was the beautiful watch of the dead woman. This watch he was fond of showing to his friends, and pointing out the monogram, C. J., in diamonds;

for, like his mother, he found it easy to transpose the letters to suit himself.

All this went a long way with Raste's intimates, and made him very popular among a certain class of young men who lived by their wits and yet kept up a show of respectability.

And then, beside her satisfaction in Raste, there was the little Lady Jane, to whom every door in the neighborhood was open. She was the most beautiful and the most stylish child that ever was seen in Good Children Street, and she attracted more attention than all the other people put together. She never went out but what she heard something flattering about the little darling, and she knew that a great many people came to the shop just to get a glimpse of her.

All this satisfied her ambition, but not her vanity. She knew that Lady Jane cared more for Pepsie, Madelon, or even little Gex, than she did for her. The child was always dutiful, but never affectionate. Sometimes a feeling of bitterness would stir within her, and, thinking she had cause to complain, she would accuse the child of ingratitude.

"She is a little ingrate, a little viper, that stings me after I have warmed her. And to think of what I 've done for her, and the worry and anxiety I 've suffered! After all, I 'm poorly paid, and get but little for all my studying and planning. She 's a little upstart, a little aristocrat, who will trample on me some day. Well, it 's what one gets in this world for doing a good deed. If I 'd turned her and her mother out to die in the street, I 'd been thought more of than I am now, and perhaps I 'd been as well off."

Chapter XIII

ONE OF THE NOBILITY

On the next block, above little Gex's fruit stall, was a small cottage set close to the sidewalk, with two narrow windows covered with batten shutters that no one remembered to have ever seen opened. On one side was a high green fence, in which was a small door, and above this fence some flowering trees were visible. A pink crape-myrtle shed its transparent petals on the sidewalk below. A white oleander and a Cape jasmine made the air fragrant, while a "Gold of Ophir" rose, entwined with a beautiful "Reine Henriette," crept along the top of the fence, and hung in riotous profusion above the heads of the passers.

Every day, in rain or shine, when Lady Jane visited little Gex, she continued her walk to the green fence, and stood looking wistfully at the clustering roses that bloomed securely beyond the reach of pilfering fingers, vainly wishing that some of them would fall at her feet, or that the gate might accidentally open, so that she could get a peep within.

And Lady Jane was not more curious than most of the older residents of Good Children Street. For many years it had been the desire of the neighborhood to see what was going on behind that impenetrable green fence. Those who were lucky enough to get a glimpse, when the gate was opened for a moment to take the nickel of milk, or loaf of bread, saw a beautiful little garden, carefully tended and filled with exquisite flowers; but Lady Jane was never fortunate enough to be present on one of those rare occasions, as

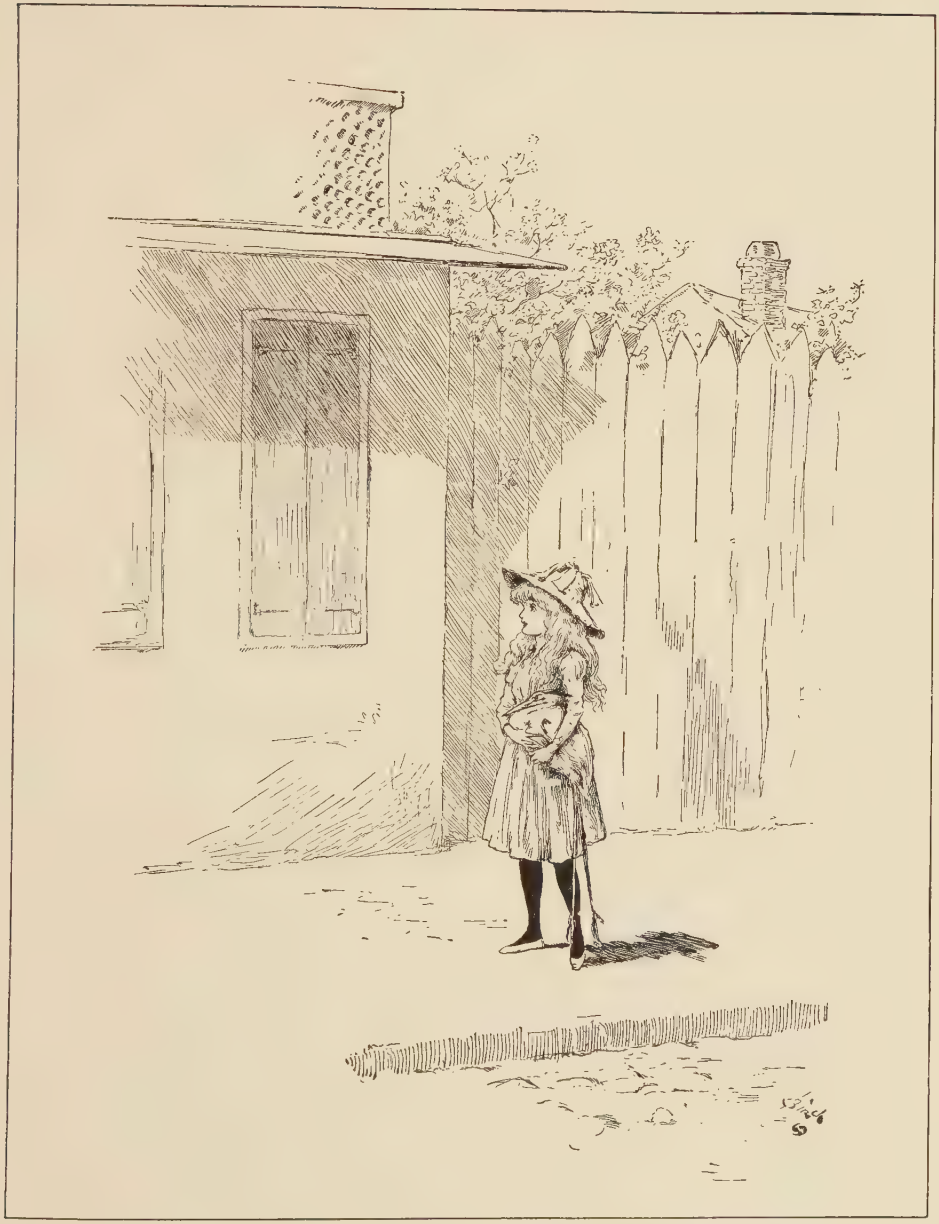
they always happened very early, and when her little yellow head was resting on its pillow; but sometimes, while she lingered on the sidewalk, near the gate, or under the tightly closed shutters, she would hear the melodious song of a bird, or the tinkling, liquid sound of an ancient piano, thin and clear as a trickling rivulet, and with it she would hear sometimes a high, sweet, tremulous voice singing an aria from some old-fashioned opera. Lady Jane did n't know that it was an old-fashioned opera, but she thought it very odd and beautiful, all the same; and she loved to linger and listen to the correct but feeble rendering of certain passages that touched her deeply: for the child had an inborn love of music and one of the most exquisite little voices ever heard.

Pepsie used to close her eyes in silent ecstasy when Lady Jane sang the few simple airs and lullabies she had learned from her mother, and when her tender little voice warbled

> "Sleep, baby, sleep,
> The white moon is the shepherdess,
> The little stars the sheep,"

Pepsie would cover her face, and cry silently. No one ever heard her sing but Pepsie. She was very shy about it, and if even Tite Souris came into the room she would stop instantly.

Therefore, little Gex was very much surprised one day, when he went out on the *banquette*, to see his small favorite before the closed shutters with Tony in her arms, his long legs almost touching the sidewalk, so carelessly was he held, while his enraptured little mistress was standing with her serious eyes fixed steadily on the window, her face pale and illumined with a sort of spiritual light, her lips parted, and a ripple of the purest, sweetest, most liquid melody issuing from between them that Gex had ever heard, even in those old days when he used to haunt the French Opera.



"LADY JANE WAS LINGERING ON THE SIDEWALK, NEAR THE GREEN FENCE."

He softly drew near to listen; she was keeping perfect time with the tinkling piano and the faded voice of the singer within, who with many a quaver and break was singing a beautiful old French song; and the bird-like voice of the child went up and down, in and out through the difficult passages with wonderful passion and precision.

Gex slipped away silently, and stole almost guiltily into his little den. He had discovered one of the child's secret pleasures, as well as one of her rare gifts, and he felt that he had no right to possess such wonderful knowledge.

Ma foi!" he thought, wiping away a fugitive tear, for the music had awakened slumbering memories, "some one ought to know of that voice. I wish Mam'selle d'Hautreve was n't so unapproachable; I 'd speak to her, and perhaps she 'd teach the child."

Presently Lady Jane entered, carrying Tony languidly; she said good-morning as politely as usual, and smiled her charming smile, but she seemed preoccupied, and unusually serious. With a tired sigh she dropped Tony on the floor, and climbed up to her chair, where she sat for some time in deep thought. At length she said in an intensely earnest voice: "Oh, Mr. Gex, I wish I could get inside that gate some way. I wish I could see who it is that sings."

"Why, my leetle lady, it 's Mam'selle Diane vhat sings so fine?"

"Who is Mam'selle Diane?"

"Mam'selle Diane is the daughter of Madame d'Hautreve vhat live all alone in the leetle shut-up house. Madame and Mam'selle Diane, they are *noblesse*, of the nobility. Vell, you don't know vhat is that. *Attendez*, I vill try to make you understand."

"Is it rich?" asked Lady Jane, anxious to help simplify the situation.

"Oh no, no, they are vairy, vairy poor; *noblesse* is vhat you 're born vith."

"Like the spine in the back," suggested Lady Jane eagerly. "Pepsie says you 're born with that."

"No, it 's not that," and Gex smiled a grim, puzzled smile, and pushing his spectacles on the top of his head, he wiped his forehead thoughtfully. "You 've heard of the king, my leetle lady, now have n't you."

"Oh, yes, yes," returned Lady Jane brightly. "They wear crowns and sit on thrones, and Pepsie says there is a king of the carnival, King Rex."

"Yes, that 's it," said Gex, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, "and the king is vay up high over everybody, and all the peoples must honor the king. Vell, the *noblesse* is something like the king, my leetle lady, only not quite so high up. Vell, Mam'selle's *grand-père* vas a noble. One of the French *noblesse*. Does my leetle lady understand?"

"I think I do," returned Lady Jane doubtfully. "Does she sit on a throne and wear a crown?"

"Oh, no, no, they are poor, vairy poor," said Gex humbly, "and then, my leetle lady must know that the *comte* is naiver so high up as the king, and then they have lost all their money and are poor, vairy poor. Once, long ago, they vas rich, oh, vairy rich, and they had one big, grand house, and the carriage, and the fine horses, and many, many servant; now there's only them two vhat lives all alone in the leetle house. The *grandpère*, and the *père*, all are dead long ago, and Madame d'Hautreve and Mam'selle Diane only are left to live in the leetle house, shut up behind that high fence, alone, alvay alone. And, my leetle lady, no one remembers them, I don't believe, for it is ten year I've been right in this Rue des Bons Enfants, and I naiver have seen no one entair that gate, and no one comes out of it vairy often. Mam'selle Diane must clean her *banquette* in the dark of the night, for I 've naiver seen her do it. I 've vatched, but

I have seen her, naiver. Sometime, when it is vairy early, Mam'selle Diane comes to my leetle shop for one dime of orange for Madam d'Hautreve, she is vairy old and so poor. Ah, but she is one of the *noblesse*, the genuine French *noblesse*, and Mam'selle Diane is so polite vhen she come to my leetle shop."

"If I should go there early, very early," asked Lady Jane with increasing interest, "and wait there all day, don't you think I might see her come out?"

"You might, my leetle lady, and you might not. About once in the month, Mam'selle Diane comes out all in the black dress and veil, and one little black basket on her arm, and she goes up toward Rue Royal. Vhen she goes out the basket it is heavy, vhen she comes back it is light."

"What does she carry in it, Mr. Gex?" asked Lady Jane, her eyes large and her voice awe-stricken over the mysterious contents of the basket.

"Ah, I know not, my leetle lady. It is one mystery," returned Gex solemnly. "Mam'selle Diane is so proud and so shut up that no one can't find out anything. Poor lady, and vhen does she do her market, and vhat do they eat, for all I evair see her buy is one nickel of bread, and one nickel of milk."

"But she 's got flowers and birds, and she plays on the piano and sings," said Lady Jane reflectively. "Perhaps she is n't hungry and does n't want anything to eat."

"That may be so, my leetle lady," replied Gex with smiling approval, "I naiver thought of it, but it may be so — it may be so. Perhaps the *noblesse* don't have the big appetite, and don't want so much to eat as the common people."

"Oh, I nearly forgot, Mr. Gex, Pepsie wants a nickel of cabbage," and Lady Jane suddenly returned to earth and earthly things, did her errand, took her *lagniappe*, and went away.

Chapter XIV

Lady Jane visits the d'Hautreves

One morning Lady Jane was rewarded for her patient waiting; as usual, she was lingering on the sidewalk near the green fence, when she heard the key turn in the lock, and suddenly the door opened, and an elderly lady, very tall and thin, with a mild, pale face, appeared and beckoned her to approach.

For a moment Lady Jane felt shy, and drew back, fearing that she had been a little rude in haunting the place so persistently; besides, to her knowledge, she had never before stood in the presence of "genuine French nobility," and the pale, solemn looking woman, who, in spite of her rusty gown, had an air of distinction, rather awed her. However, her good breeding soon got the better of her timidity, and she went forward with a charming smile.

"Would you like to come in, my dear, and look at my flowers?" said the lady, opening the gate a little wider for Lady Jane to enter.

"Yes, thank you," and Lady Jane smiled and flushed with pleasure when she caught a glimpse of the beautiful vista beyond the dark figure. "May I bring Tony in, too?"

"Certainly, I want to see him very much, but I want to see you more," and she laid her hand caressingly on the beautiful head of the child. "I 've been watching you for some time."

"Have you? Why, how did you see me?" and Lady Jane dimpled with smiles.

"Oh, through a little chink in my fence; I see more than any one would think," replied the lady smiling.

"And you saw me waiting and waiting; oh, why did n't you ask me in before? I 've wanted to come in so much, and did you know I 'd been here singing with you?"

"No, I did n't know that."

"Are you Mam'selle Diane?"

"Yes, I am Mam'selle Diane; and what is your name?"

"I 'm called Lady Jane."

"*Lady* Jane,—*Lady?* Why, do you know that you have a title of nobility?"

"But I 'm not one of the nobility. It 's my name, just Lady Jane. Papa always called me Lady Jane. I did n't know what nobility was, and Mr. Gex told me that you were one. Now I 'll never forget what it is, but I 'm not one."

"You 're a very sweet little girl, all the same," said Mam'selle Diane, a smile breaking over her grave face. "Come in, I want to show you and your bird to mama."

Lady Jane followed her guide across a small, spotless side gallery into a tiny room of immaculate cleanliness, where, sitting in an easy chair near a high bed, was an old, old lady, the oldest person Lady Jane had ever seen, with hair as white as snow, combed back from a delicate, shrunken face and covered with a little black silk cap.

"Mama, this is the little girl with the bird of whom I 've been telling you," said Mam'selle Diane, leading her forward. "And, Lady Jane, this is my mother, Madame d'Hautreve."

The old lady shook hands with the child and patted her head caressingly; then she asked, in a weak, quavering voice, if the bird was n't too heavy for the little girl to carry.

"Oh, no, Madame," replied Lady Jane, brightly. "Tony 's large, he grows very fast, but he is n't heavy, he 's all feathers, he 's very light; would you like to take him?"

"Oh, no, no, my dear, oh no," said the old lady, drawing back

timidly. "I should n't like to touch it, but I should like to see it walk. I suppose it 's a crane, is n't it?"

"He 's a blue heron, and he 's not a common bird," replied Lady Jane, repeating her little formula, readily and politely.

"I see that it 's different from a crane," said Mam'selle Diane, looking at Tony critically, who, now that his mistress had put him down, stood on one leg very much humped up, and making, on the whole, rather an ungainly figure.

"Tony always will do that before strangers," observed Lady Jane apologetically. "When I want him to walk about and show his feathers, he just draws himself up and stands on one leg."

"However, he is very pretty and very odd. Don't you think I might succeed in copying him?" And Mam'selle Diane turned an anxious glance on her mother.

"I don't know, my dear," quavered the old lady, "his legs are so long that they would break easily if they were made of sealing-wax."

"I think I could use a wire with the sealing-wax," said Mam'selle Diane, thoughtfully regarding Tony's leg. "You see there would be only one."

"I know, my dear, but the wool; you 've got no wool the color of his feathers."

"Madame Jourdain would send for it."

"But, Diane, think of the risk; if you should n't succeed, you 'd waste the wool, and you do the ducks so well, really, my dear, I think you 'd better be satisfied with the ducks and the canaries."

"Mama, it would be something new, something original. I 'm tired of ducks and canaries."

"Well, my dear, I shan't oppose you, if you think you can succeed, but it 's a great risk to start out with an entirely new model, and you can't use the wool for the ducks if you should fail; you must think of that, my dear, whether you can afford to lose the wool, if you fail."

LADY JANE IS PRESENTED TO MADAME D'HAUTREVE.

While this conversation was going on between Mam'selle Diane and her mother, Lady Jane's bright eyes were taking in the contents of the little room. It was very simply furnished, the floor was bare, and the walls were destitute of adornment, save over the small fireplace, where hung a fine portrait of a very handsome man dressed in a rich court dress of the time of Louis XIV. This elegant courtier was Mam'selle Diane's grandfather, the Count d'Hautreve, and under this really fine work of art, on the small mantelpiece, was some of the handicraft of his impoverished granddaughter, which fascinated Lady Jane to such a degree that she had neither eyes nor ears for anything else.

The center of the small shelf was ornamented with a tree made of a variety of shades of green wool over a wire frame, and apparently hopping about among the foliage, on little sealing-wax legs, with black bead eyes and sealing-wax bills, were a number of little wool birds of every color under the sun, while at each end of the mantel were similar little trees, one loaded with soft yellow canaries, the other with little fluffy white things of a species to puzzle an ornithologist. Lady Jane thought they were adorable, and her fingers almost ached to caress them.

"Oh, how pretty they are!" she sighed, at length, quite overcome with admiration; "how soft and yellow! Why, they are like real live birds, and they 're ever so much prettier than Tony," she added, glancing ruefully at her homely pet; "but then they can't hop and fly and come when you call them."

Madame d'Hautreve and Mam'selle Diane witnessed her delight with much satisfaction. It seemed a tardy, but genuine, recognition of genius.

"There, you see, my dear, that I was right, I 've always said it," quavered the old lady. "I 've always said that your birds were wonderful, and the child sees it; children tell the truth, they are sincere in their praise, and when they discover merit, they acknow-

ledge it simply and truthfully. I 've always said that all you needed to give you a reputation was recognition,— I 've always said it, if you remember; but show her the ducks, my dear, show her the ducks. I think, if possible, that they are more natural than the others."

Mam'selle Diane's sad, grave face lighted up a little as she led the child to a table near the side window, which was covered with pieces of colored flannel, sticks of sealing-wax, and bunches of soft yellow wool. In this table was a drawer which she drew out carefully, and there on little scalloped flannel mats of various colors sat a number of small yellow downy ducklings.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Lady Jane, not able to find other words at the moment to express her wonder and delight.

"Would you like to hold one?" asked Mam'selle Diane, taking one out.

Lady Jane held out her pink palm, and rapturously smoothed down its little woolly back with her soft fingers. "Oh, how pretty, how pretty!" she repeated in a half-suppressed tone.

"Yes, I think they are rather pretty," said Mam'selle Diane modestly, "but then they are so useful."

"What are they for?" asked Lady Jane in surprise; she could not think they were made for any other purpose than for ornament.

"They are pen-wipers, my dear. You see, the pen is wiped with the little cloth mat they are sitting on."

Yes, they were pen-wipers; Mademoiselle Diane d'Hautreve, grand-daughter of the Count d'Hautreve, made little woolen ducklings for pen-wipers, and sold them quite secretly to Madame Jourdain, on the Rue Royale, in order to have bread for her aged mother and herself.

Lady Jane unknowingly had solved the financial mystery connected with the d'Hautreve ladies, and at the same time she had made another valuable friend for herself.

Chapter XV

Lady Jane Finds a Music-Teacher

On the occasion of Lady Jane's first visit to the d'Hautreve ladies, she had been so interested in Mam'selle Diane's works of art that she had paid no attention whatever to the piano and the flowers.

But on the second visit, while Tony was posing as a model (for suddenly he had developed great perfection in that capacity), she critically examined the ancient instrument.

Presently she asked a little timidly, "Is that what you make music on when you sing, Mam'selle Diane?"

Mam'selle Diane nodded an affirmative. She was very busy modeling Tony's leg in sealing-wax.

"Is it a piano?"

"Yes, my dear, it 's a piano. Did you never see one before?"

"Oh yes, and I 've played on one. Mama used to let me play on hers; but it was large, very large, and not like this."

"Where was that?" asked Mam'selle Diane, while a swift glance passed between her and her mother.

"Oh, that was on the ranch, before we came away."

"Then you lived on a ranch. Where was it, my dear?"

"I don't know," and Lady Jane looked puzzled. "It was just the ranch. It was in the country, and there were fields and fields, and a great many horses, and sheep, and lambs—dear little lambs!"

"Then the lady you live with is not your mama," said Mam'selle Diane casually, while she twisted the sealing-wax into the shape of the foot.

"Oh no, she's my Tante Pauline. My mama has gone away, but Pepsie says she 's sure to come back before Christmas; and it 's not very long now till Christmas." The little face grew radiant with expectation.

"And you like music?" said Mam'selle Diane, with a sigh; she saw how it was, and she pitied the motherless darling from the bottom of her tender heart.

"Did n't you ever hear me sing when I used to stand close to the window?" Lady Jane leaned across Mam'selle Diane's table, and looked at her with a winsome smile. "I sang as loud as I could, so you 'd hear me; I thought, perhaps, you 'd let me in."

"Dear little thing!" returned Mam'selle Diane, caressingly. Then she turned and spoke in French to her mother: "You know, mama, I wanted to ask her in before, but you thought she might meddle with my wools and annoy me; but she 's not troublesome at all. I wish I could teach her music when I have time."

Lady Jane glanced from one to the other gravely and anxiously. "I 'm learning French," she said; "Pepsie's teaching me, and when I learn it you can always talk to me in French. I know some words now."

Mam'selle Diane smiled. "I was telling mama that I should like to teach you music. Would you like to learn?"

"What, to play on the piano?" and the child's eyes glistened with delight.

"Yes, to play and sing, both."

"I can sing now," with a little, shy, wistful smile.

"Well then, sing for us while I finish Tony's leg, and afterward I will sing for you."

"Shall I sing, 'Sleep, baby, sleep'?"

"Yes, anything you like."

Lady Jane lifted her little face, flushed like a flower, but still

serious and anxious, and broke into a ripple of melody so clear, so sweet, and so delicately modulated, that Mam'selle Diane clasped her hands in ecstasy. She forgot her bunch of wool, the difficulty of Tony's breast-feathers, the impossible sealing-wax leg, and sat listening enchanted; while the old lady closed her eyes and swayed back and forth, keeping time with the dreamy rhythm of the lullaby.

"Why, my dear, you have the voice of an angel!" exclaimed Mam'selle Diane, when the child finished. "I must teach you. You *must* be taught. Mama, she *must* be taught. It would be wicked to allow such a voice to go uncultivated!"

"And what can cultivation do that nature has n't done?" asked the old lady querulously. "Sometimes, I think too much cultivation ruins a voice. Think of yours, Diane; think of what it was before all that drilling and training; think of what it was that night you sang at Madame La Baronne's, when your cousin from France, the Marquis d'Hautreve, said he had never listened to such a voice!"

"It was the youth in it, mama, the youth; I was only sixteen," and Mam'selle Diane sighed over the memory of those days.

"It was before all the freshness was cultivated out of it. You never sang so well afterward."

"I never was as young, mama, and I never had such an audience again. You know I went back to the convent; and when I came out things had changed, and I was older, and—I had changed. I think the change was in me."

Here a tear stole from the faded eyes that had looked on such triumphs.

"It is true, my dear, you never had such an opportunity again. Your cousin went back to France,—and—and—there were no more *fêtes* after those days, and there was no one left to recognize your talent. Perhaps it was as much the lack of recognition as

anything else. Yes, I say, as I always have said, that it 's recognition you need to make you famous. It 's the same with your birds as with your singing. It 's recognition you need."

"And perhaps it 's wealth too, mama," said Mam'selle Diane gently. "One is forgotten when one is poor. Why, we have been as good as dead and buried these twenty years. I believe there 's no one left who remembers us."

"No, no, my child; it 's not that," cried the old lady sharply. "We are always d'Hautreves. It was our own choice to give up society; and we live so far away, it is inconvenient,—so few of our old friends keep carriages now; and besides, we have no day to receive. It was a mistake giving up our reception-day; since then people have n't visited us."

"I was thinking, mama," said Mam'selle Diane timidly, "that if I did as well with my ducks next year as I have this, we might have a 'day' again. We might send cards, and let our old friends know that we are still alive."

"We might, we might," said the old lady, brightening visibly. "We are always d'Hautreves"; then her face fell suddenly. "But, Diane, my dear, we have n't either of us a silk dress, and it would never do for us to receive in anything but silk."

"That 's true, mama. I never thought of that. We may not be able to have a 'day,' after all," and Mam'selle Diane bent her head dejectedly over her sealing-wax and wool.

While these reminiscences were exchanged by the mother and daughter, Lady Jane, whose singing had called them forth, slipped out into the small garden, where, amid a profusion of bloom and fragrance, she was now listening to the warbling of a canary whose cage hung among the branches of a Maréchal Niel rose. It was the bird whose melody had enraptured her, while she was yet without the paradise, and it was the effigy of that same bird that

she had seen on Mam'selle Diane's green woolen trees. He was a bright, jolly little fellow, and he sang as if he were wound up and never would run down.

Lady Jane listened to him delightedly while she inspected the beds of flowers. It was a little place, but contained a great variety of plants, and each was carefully trained and trimmed; and under all the seedlings were laid little sheets of white paper on which some seeds had already fallen.

Lady Jane eyed the papers curiously. She did not know that these tiny black seeds added yearly a few dollars to the d'Hautreve revenues, and, at the same time, furnished the thrifty gardener with all she needed for her own use. But whose hands pruned and trained, dug and watered? Were they the hands of the myth of a servant who came so early before madame was out of her bed — for the old aristocrat loved to sleep late — to clean the gallery and *banquette* and do other odd jobs unbecoming a d'Hautreve?

Yes, the very same; and Mam'selle Diane was not an early riser because of sleeplessness, nor was it age that made her slender hands so hard and brown.

Chapter XVI

PEPSIE IS JEALOUS

When Mam'selle Diane joined Lady Jane in the garden, she had gained her mother's consent to give the child a music lesson once a week. The old lady had been querulous and difficult; she had discussed and objected, but finally Mam'selle Diane had overcome her prejudices.

"You don't know what kind of people her relatives are," the old lady said, complainingly, "and if we once open our doors to the child the aunt may try to crowd in. We don't want to make any new acquaintances. There 's one satisfaction we still have, that, although we are poor, *very* poor, we are always d'Hautreves, and we always have been exclusive, and I hope we always shall be. As soon as we allow those people to break down the barrier between us, they will rush in on us, and, in a little while, they will forget who we are."

"Never fear, mama; if the aunt is as well bred as the child, she will not annoy us. If we wish to know her, we shall probably have to make the first advances, for, judging by the child, they are not common people. I have never seen so gentle and polite a little girl. I 'm sure she 'll be no trouble."

"I don't know about that. Children are natural gossips, and she is very intelligent for her age. She will notice everything, and the secret of your birds will get out."

"Well, mama dear, if you feel that she will be an intrusion upon our privacy, I won't insist; but I should so like to have her, just for

two hours, say, once a week. It would give me a new interest; it would renew my youth to hear her angelic little voice sometimes."

"Oh, I suppose you must have your way, Diane, as you always do. Young people nowadays have no respect for the prejudices of age. We must yield all our traditions and habits to their new-fashioned ideas, or else we are severe and tyrannical."

"Oh, mama, dear mama, I 'm sure you 're a little, just a little, unkind now," said Mam'selle Diane, soothingly. "I 'll give it up at once if you really wish it; but I don't think you do. I 'm sure the child will interest you; beside, I 'm getting on so well with the bird —you would n't have me give up my model, would you?"

"Certainly not, my dear. If you need her, let her come. At least you can try for a while, and if you find her troublesome, and the lessons a task, you can stop them when you like."

When this not very gracious consent was obtained, Mam'selle Diane hastened to tell Lady Jane that, if her aunt approved, she could come to her every Saturday, from one to three, when she would teach her the piano, as well as singing; and that after the lesson, if she liked to remain awhile in the garden with the birds and flowers, she was at liberty to do so.

Lady Jane fairly flew to tell Pepsie the good news; but, much to her surprise, her merry and practical friend burst into tears and hid her face on the table among the pecan shells.

"Why, Pepsie — dear, dear Pepsie, what ails you?" cried Lady Jane, in an agony of terror, "tell me what ails you?" and, dropping Tony, she laid her little face among the shells and cried too.

"I 'm—I 'm—jealous," said Pepsie, looking up after a while, and rubbing her eyes furiously. "I 'm a fool, I know, but I can't help it; I don't want her to have you. I don't want you to go there. Those fine, proud people will teach you to look down on us. We 're poor, my mother sells pralines, and the people that live

behind that green fence are too proud and fine to notice any one in this street. They 've lived here ever since I was born, and no one 's seen them, because they 've kept to themselves always; and now, when I 've just got you to love, they want to take you away, they want to teach you to—*despise*—us!" and Pepsie stumbled over the unusual word in her passionate vehemence, while she still cried and rubbed angrily.

"But don't cry, Pepsie," entreated Lady Jane. "I don't love Mam'selle Diane as well as I love you. It 's the music, the singing. Oh, Pepsie, dear, dear Pepsie, let me learn music, and I 'll be good and love you *dearly!*"

"No,—no, you won't, you won't care any more for me," insisted Pepsie, the little demon of jealousy raging to such a degree that she was quite ready to be unjust, as well as unreasonable.

"Are you cross at me, Pepsie?" and Lady Jane crept almost across the table to cling tearfully to her friend's neck. "Don't be cross, and I won't go to Mam'selle Diane. I won't learn music, and, Pepsie dear, I 'll—I 'll—give you Tony!"

This was the extreme of renunciation, and it touched the generous heart of the girl to the very quick. "You dear little angel!" she cried with a sudden revulsion of feeling, clasping and kissing the child passionately. "You 're as sweet and good as you can be, and I 'm wicked and selfish!" Yes, wicked and selfish. It 's for your good, and I 'm trying to keep you away. You ought to hate me for being so mean."

At this moment Tite Souris entered, and, seeing the traces of tears on her mistress's cheeks, broke out in stern, reproachful tones.

"Miss Lady, what 's you be'n a-doin' to my Miss Peps'? You done made her cry. I see how she 's be'n a-gwine on. You jes' look out, or her ma 'll git a'ter you, ef yer makes dat po' crooked gal cry dat a-way."

"'YES, LADY DEAR, I WANT YOU TO LEARN TO PLAY ON THE PIANO, AND I 'LL TELL YOU WHAT I 'VE BEEN THINKING OF,' SAID PEPSIE."

"Hush, Tite," cried Pepsie, "you need n't blame Miss Lady. It was my fault. I was wicked and selfish, I did n't want her to go to Mam'selle Diane. I was jealous, that 's all."

"Pepsie cried because she thought I would n't love her," put in Lady Jane, in an explanatory tone, quite ignoring Tite's burst of loyalty. "Mam'selle Diane is nobility — French nobility, and Pepsie thought I 'd be proud, and love Mam'selle best,—did n't you, Pepsie?"

"Now, jes' hear that chile," cried Tite, scornfully. "If dey *is* nobil'ty, dey is po' white trash. Shore 's I live, dat tall lean one wat look lak a graveyard figger, she git outen her bed 'fore sun-up, an' brick her banquette her own se'f. I done seed her, one mornin'; she war a-scrubbin' lak mad. An' bress yer, honey, she done had a veil on; so no one won't know her. Shore 's I live, she done brick her banquette wid a veil on."

"If she cleans the banquette herself, they must be very poor," was Pepsie's logical conclusion. "Perhaps, after all, they 're not so proud; only they don't want people to know how poor they are. And, Tite, don't you tell that on the poor lady. You know it 's just one of your stories about her having a veil on. It may have been some one else. You could n't tell who it was, if she had a veil on, as you say."

This argument did not in the least shake Tite Souris in her conviction that she had seen the grand-daughter of the Count d'Hautreve bricking her banquette before "sun-up" with a veil over her face.

However, Lady Jane and Pepsie were reconciled, and the little cripple, to show her confidence in the child's affection, was now as anxious to have her go to Mam'selle Diane and learn music, as she was averse to it before.

"Yes, Lady dear, I want you to learn to play on the piano, and I 'll tell you what I 've been thinking of," said Pepsie as they leaned

confidentially toward each other across the table, "mama has some money in the bank. She 's been saving it to get something for me. You know, she does everything I want her to do. I wanted to learn to read, and she had a teacher come to me every day until I could read and write very well, so I 'm sure she 'll do this, if I want her to; and this is what it is. She must buy a piano to put right there in that space next the bed."

"For me to play on? Oh, Pepsie, how lovely!" and Lady Jane clasped her hands with delight.

"And you can practise all the time," continued the practical Pepsie. "You know, if you ever learn music well you must practise a great deal. Cousin Marie practised three hours a day in the convent. And then, when you are grown up, you 'll sing in the cathedral, and earn a great deal of money; and you can buy a beautiful white satin dress, all trimmed down the front with lace, and they will ask you to sing in the French Opera, on Rue Bourbon; and every one will bring you flowers, and rings and bracelets, and jewels, and you 'll be just like a queen."

"And sit on a throne, and wear a crown?" gasped Lady Jane, her eyes wide and sparkling, and her cheeks flushed over the glories of Pepsie's riotous imagination.

"Yes," said Pepsie. Now that she had started she meant to give full rein to her fancy. "And every one will be ready to worship you, and you 'll ride out in a blue carriage, with eight white horses."

"Oh, oh!" interrupted Lady Jane rapturously; "and you 'll go with me, and it will be just as good as riding in Tante Modeste's milk cart."

"Better, much better," agreed Pepsie, quite willing, in her present mood, to admit that there was something better; "and then you 'll have a big, big house in the country, with grass, and trees, and flowers, and a fountain that will tinkle, tinkle all the time."

"And you and Mama Madelon will live with me always." Here a sudden shadow passed over the bright little face, and the wide eyes grew very wistful, "and, Pepsie, perhaps God will let papa and mama come and live with me again."

"Perhaps so, dear," returned Pepsie with quick sympathy. "When I say my prayers, I 'll ask."

Presently Lady Jane said softly, with an anxious glance at Pepsie, "You know, you told me that mama might come back before Christmas. It 's nearly Christmas, is n't it? Oh, I wish I could know if she was coming back! Can't you ask your cards, Pepsie? Perhaps they 'll tell if she 'll come."

"I 'll try," replied Pepsie, "yes, I 'll try; but sometimes they won't tell."

When Lady Jane asked permission of Madame Jozain to study music with Mam'selle Diane, Tante Pauline consented readily. In fact, she was overjoyed. It was no common honor to have one's niece instructed by a d'Hautreve, and it was another feather in her much beplumed cap. By and by people would think more of her and treat her with greater consideration. When she was once intimate with the d'Hautreve ladies, the neighbors would n't dare turn the cold shoulder to her; for through their interest in the child she expected to gain a foothold for herself; but she had yet to learn how very exclusive a d'Hautreve could be, under certain circumstances.

Chapter XVII

Lady Jane's Dancing-Master

Among all Lady Jane's friends there was no one who congratulated her on her good fortune with half the enthusiasm and warmth displayed by little Gex.

"Vell, vell, my dear leetle lady," he said, rubbing his small hands delightedly. "Vhy, you are in luck, and no mistake! To have such a teacher for the music as Mam'selle Diane d'Hautreve is as good as a fortune to you. She 'll give you the true style,—the style of the French nobility, the only style vhat is good. I know just vhat that is. Peoples think old Gex knows nothing; but they 're mistaken, leetle lady; they 're mistaken. They don't know vhat I vas once. There is n't nothing in music that Gex has n't heard. I 've seen everything fine, and I 've heard everything fine, vhen I used to be alvays at the French opera."

"Oh, were you in the French opera?" interrupted Lady Jane, with sparkling eyes; "that 's where Pepsie says I shall sing, and I 'm going to have flowers and—and a throne, and—oh, I don't remember; but everything, *everything!*" she added impressively, summing it all up in one blissful whole.

"Vell, I should n't vonder, I should n't vonder," said Gex, looking at her proudly, with his head on one side, much like an antiquated crow, "for you 've got one voice already vhat vould make soft the heart of one stone."

"Oh, Mr. Gex, where did *you* hear me sing?" and Lady Jane looked at him with grave surprise. "I never sang for any one but Pepsie, and Mam'selle Diane, and you were n't there."

"But I 've heard you sing; I 've heard you, my leetle lady," insisted the old man, with twinkling eyes. "It vas one morning vhen you vas a-singing vith Mam'selle Diane, outside on the banquette. I stepped out, and there I heard you sing like one leetle bird; but you did n't know I vas a-listening."

"No, I did n't know it," said Lady Jane, smiling brightly again. "I 'm glad you heard me, and some day I 'll sing, 'Sleep, baby, sleep,' for you if you 'd like to hear it."

Mr. Gex assured her that he would, and added that he adored the music. "I have n't heard the fine music for many years," he remarked, with a little sigh, "and I used to be just crazed for it; but I vas different then, leetle lady, I vas different; you vould n't think it, but I vas different."

"You did n't wear a handkerchief over your ears then, did you, Mr. Gex?"

"No, no, my leetle lady; it vas the ear-ache vat made me tie up my ear."

"Did you wear an apron, and did you sew?" continued Lady Jane, very curious to know in what ways he was different.

"Vear an apron!" exclaimed Gex, holding up his hands. "Vhy, bless your leetle heart, I dressed like one gentleman. I vore the black clothes, fine and glossy. I vas one neat leetle man. My hair vas black and curly and, you von't believe it, I 'm afraid you von't believe it, but I vore the silk hose, and leetle fine shoes tied vith one ribbon, and one gold chain across my vaistcoat, and one ring on that finger," and Gex touched one of his hard and shrunken digits by way of emphasis

"Did you, Mr. Gex,—oh, did you?" and Lady Jane's eyes glistened, and her little face was one smile of delight. "Oh, how nice you must have looked! But you did n't have a fruit-stall then?"

"No, indeed; no, indeed; I vas in one fine business. I vas fashionable then; I vas one fine leetle gentleman."

"Mr. Gex, what *did* you do?" cried Lady Jane, in a little, shrill, impetuous voice, for her curiosity had reached the climax. "I want to know what you did, when you curled your hair and wore a gold chain."

"I vas one professeur, leetle lady. I vas one professeur."

"One professeur! Oh, what is one professeur?" cried Lady Jane impatiently.

"He is one gentleman vhat does teach."

"Then you taught music. Oh, I 've guessed it,—you taught music," and Lady Jane looked at him admiringly. "Now I know why you like it so much!"

"No, no, leetle lady. It vas not the music. It vas the sister to the music; it vas the dance. I vas professeur of the dance. Think of that, of the dance. So nimble, so quick; see, like this," and little Gex, carried away by the memory of his former triumphs, took hold of the sides of his apron and made two or three quaint, fantastic steps, ending them with a little pirouette and a low bow which enchanted Lady Jane.

"Oh, how funny, how funny! Please do it again—won't you, Mr. Gex? Oh, do, *do!*"

Gex smiled indulgently, but shook his head. "No, no, leetle lady. Once is enough, just to show you how nimble and quick one professeur of the dance can be; but then I vas young and supple, and full of life. I vas running over vith life; I vas one fine leetle gentleman, so springy and light, and I vas all the fashion. Vould you believe it, leetle lady? I had one fine grand house on Rue Royale, and all the rich peoples, and all the noblesse, and all the leetle gentlemen and the small leetle ladies like you came to the 'Professeur Gex' to learn the dance."

"But why, why, Mr. Gex, did you leave the Rue Royale?" asked Lady Jane, greatly puzzled at his changed condition, and anxious to know by what strange freak of destiny he had been brought to sell fruit and vegetables in Good Children Street, to wear an apron, and to mend his own stockings.

"Ah, vell, my leetle lady, it vas many things vhat brought me to here," he replied, with a sigh of resignation. "You see I did not stay the fashion. I got old, and the rheumatism made me slow and stiff, and I vas no more such a fine, light leetle gentleman. I could not jump and turn so nimble and quick, and a new professeur came from Paris, and to him vent all my pupils. I had no money, because I vas vairy fond of good living and I lived high like one gentleman; and so ven I vas old I vas poor, and there vas nothing but to sell the fruit and vegetables in Good Children Street."

"Oh, dear, dear, what a pity!" sighed Lady Jane regretfully. To think that the mighty had fallen so low touched her loyal little heart, and brought the tears of sympathy to her blue eyes.

"Naiver mind, naiver mind. You see I vas old, and I could not teach the dance alvay; but *attendez*, my leetle lady, listen to vhat I say," and he clasped his hands persuasively, and turned his head on one side, his little twinkling eyes full of entreaty. "Vould you, now, vould you like to learn the dance? I 'm old, and I 'm no more so nimble and light, but I know the steps, all the fine steps, and my leetle lady must learn the dance some time. Von't you let me teach you how to take the fine leetle steps?"

"Oh, Mr. Gex, *will* you?" cried Lady Jane, jumping down from her chair, with a flushed, eager face, and standing in front of the little dancing-master. "Do, do! — I 'm all ready. Teach them to me now!"

"Vell, that is all right, stand as you are, and I vill begin just now," said Gex, beaming with pleasure, while he hurriedly rolled

his apron up under his armpits, and pushed his spectacles well on the top of his bald head. "Now, now, leetle lady, turn out your toes, take hold of your skirt, just so. Right foot, left foot, just so. Vatch me. Right foot, left foot. One, two, three. Right foot, one, two; left foot, one, two, three; half around, one, two, three; just so, vatch me. Back again, half around, one, two, one, two — oh, good, good, vairy good! My leetle lady, you vill learn the dance so vell!"

It was a delicious picture that they made in the dingy little shop, surrounded by fruit and vegetables. Lady Jane, with her yellow flying hair, her radiant rosy face, her gracious head coquettishly set on one side, her sparkling blue eyes fixed on Gex, her dainty little fingers holding out her short skirt, her slender, graceful legs and tiny feet advancing and retreating in shy mincing steps, turning and whirling with a graceful swaying motion first on one side, then the other, right in front of Gex, who, with a face of preternatural gravity, held out his loose trousers' legs, and turned his small brogans to the correct angle, while he went through all the intricate steps of a first dancing-lesson in the quaint, old-fashioned style of fifty years ago, every movement being closely followed by the child with a grace and spirit really charming.

When the lesson was over, and Lady Jane ran to tell her friend of this latest stroke of good fortune, Pepsie showed all her white teeth in a broad smile of satisfaction.

"Well, Lady," she said, "you *are* a lucky child. You 've not only found a music-teacher, but you 've found a dancing-master."

Chapter XVIII

Lady Jane's Christmas Presents

Christmas came and went; and whatever hopes, desires, or regrets filled the loving little heart of Lady Jane, the child kept them to herself, and was outwardly as bright and cheerful as on other days, although Pepsie, who watched her closely, thought that she detected a wistfulness in her eyes, and, at times, a sad note in the music of her happy voice. If the affection that finds expression in numerous Christmas gifts can make a child contented, Lady Jane had certainly no reason to complain.

The first thing on which her eyes fell when she awoke was her stockings, the slender legs very much swollen and bulged, hanging in Madame's chimney-corner, waiting to be relieved of their undue expansion. Even Raste — the extravagant and impecunious Raste — had remembered her; for a very dressy doll, with a French-gilt bangle encircling its waist (the bangle being intended not for the doll, but for Lady Jane), bore a card on which was inscribed in bold characters, "M. Adraste Jozain," and underneath the name, "A mery Crismus." Adraste was very proud of his English, and as Lady Jane was more grateful than critical it passed muster. Then there was a basket of fruit from Gex, and beside the basket nestled a little yellow duckling which came from Mam'selle Diane, as Lady Jane knew without looking at the tiny old-fashioned card attached to it. And, after she had been made happy at home, she still had another pleasure in store, for Pepsie, wishing to witness the pleasure of her little friend, had the Paichoux presents, with her own and Madelon's, beautifully arranged on her table, and carefully covered,

until the important moment of unveiling. Every Paichoux had remembered Lady Jane, and a finer array of picture books, dolls, and toys was never spread before a happier child; but the presents which pleased her most were a small music box from Madelon, a tiny silver thimble from Pepsie, and Mam'selle Diane's little duckling. These she kept always among her treasures.

"The day *I* like best," said Pepsie, after Lady Jane had exhausted all the adjectives expressive of admiration, "is the *jour de l'an*, New Year's, as you call it. Then Tante Modeste and the children come and bring bonbons and fireworks, and the street is lighted from one end to the other, and the sky is full of rockets and Roman candles, and there is so much noise, and every one is merry—because the New Year has come."

At that moment, Tite Souris entered with an expressive grin on her ebony face, and an air of great mystery:

"Here you, chil'runs, I done got yer Crismus; doan' say nufin 'bout it, 'cause 't ain't nufin' much. I ain't got no money ter buy dolls an' sech; so I jes bought yer boaf a 'stage plank.' I lowed yer might lak a 'stage plank.'"

Unfolding a large yellow paper, she laid a huge sheet of coarse black ginger-bread on the table among Lady Jane's treasures.

"Thank you, Tite," said Lady Jane, eyeing the strange object askance. "What is it?"

"Oh Lor', Miss Lady, ain't ye neber seed a 'stage plank'? It 's ter eat. It 's *good*,—ain't it, Miss Peps'?"

"I don't know, Tite; I never ate one," replied Pepsie, smiling broadly, "but I dare say it 's good. It 's kind of you to think of us, and we 'll try it by and by."

"Dear me!" said Pepsie, after Tite, who was grinning with satisfaction, had left the room. "What shall we do with it? We can't eat it."

"Perhaps Tony will," exclaimed Lady Jane, eagerly. "He will eat almost anything. He ate all Tante Pauline's shrimps, the other day, and he swallowed two live toads in Mam'selle Diane's garden. Oh, he 's got a dreadful appetite. Tante Pauline says she can't afford to feed him." And she looked anxiously at her greedy pet.

"Well, we 'll try him," said Pepsie, breaking off a piece of the 'stage plank' and throwing it to Tony. The bird gobbled it down promptly, and then looked for more.

Lady Jane clapped her hands delightedly. "Oh, is n't Tony nice to eat it? But we must n't let Tite know, because she 'd be sorry that *we* did n't like it. We 'll keep it and give it all to Tony," and in this way Tite's "stage plank" was disposed of.

If Christmas was a merry day to Lady Jane, New Year's was certainly a happy one. The Paichoux children came, as Pepsie said they would, loaded with bonbons and fireworks, and all day the neighborhood was lively with their fun — and such a dinner as they brought with them! Lady Jane thought there never could be anything as pretty as the table in Madelon's little room, loaded, as it was, with all sorts of good things. Tante Modeste went home to dine with her husband, but the children remained until the milk-cart came for them when it was quite dark.

After they were all gone, and quiet was restored to the tiny dwelling, Lady Jane remarked to Pepsie that she thought New Year's *was* better than Christmas.

"But just wait," said Pepsie, smiling mysteriously, "just wait until Carnival. Christmas and New Year's are lovely; but Mardi-gras — oh, Mardi-gras! there 's *nothing* like it in the world!"

Lady Jane wondered very much what "Mardi-gras" was, but tried to wait patiently until that wonderful day should arrive. The time did not pass slowly to her, surrounded as she was by tender care and affection.

Pepsie was teaching her to read and sew, and Mam'selle Diane was drilling her in scales,—although at times Madame d'Hautreve grumbled and quavered about the noise, and declared that the child was too young; for, stretch them all she could, her tiny fingers would *not* reach an octave.

And then there were the dancing lessons, which were always a pleasure, and a constant source of amusement in which Pepsie and Tite Souris shared; Pepsie as an enraptured spectator, and Tite

Souris by personating Mr. Gex in Lady Jane's frequent rehearsals; and even Tony had caught the spirit of Terpsichore, and under Lady Jane's constant instruction had learned to take steps, to mince and hop and pirouette, if not as correctly, at least as gracefully as the ancient Professor Gex.

Tite Souris had happened to pass Gex's little shop one day while Lady Jane was taking her lesson, and from that moment the humorous darky could never speak of the little dancing-master without loud explosions of laughter. "Oh Lor', Miss Peps', I wish you jes' done seed littl' Mars Gex, a-stanin' up wid he toes turn out so he look lak he o'ny got one foot, an' he ap'on roll up un'er he arms, an' he hands jes' so,"—here Tite caught the sides of her scant skirt, displaying two enormous feet and a pair of thin black legs—"a-steppin', an' a-hoppin' an' a-whirlin' an' a-smilin' wid he eyes shet, jes' as if he done got religion, an' was so happy he doan' know what'er do. An' Miss Lady, wid 'er head on one side, lak a morkin' bird, a-holdin' out 'er littl' skirt, an' a-steppin', an' a-prancin', for all de worl' jes' lak Mars Gex, an' a-puttin' 'er han' on 'er bre's', an' a-bowin' so 'er yaller har all-a-mos' tech der flo'. Lor', Lor', I done mos' die a-larfin'. Such cuttin's up yer nebber did see! It 's might' funny, Miss Peps', all dis yer dancin' an' a-caperin', but I 'se scared 'bout Miss Lady wid all dem goin's on. I 'm feared der goble-uns 'll ketch 'er sum time, w'en 'ers a-steppin' an' a-hoppin', an' tote 'er off ter dat dar ole wicked *devil*, wat 's watchin' fer triflin' chil'ren lak dat, 'cause Deacon Jone say, der devil 'll git all pussuns wat dance, shore, *shore*."

"Nonsense, Tite, go away!" cried Pepsie, laughing till the tears came at her handmaid's droll pantomime. "If what you say is true, where do you think you 'll go to? Have n't you been acting Mr. Gex for Miss Lady, over and over, when she 's been repeating her dancing-lesson to me? Have n't you been standing right up on that

floor, holding out your skirt, and dancing back and forth, and whirling, and prancing, as much like Mr. Gex as you possibly could? *Have n't* you now, Tite? And I 'm sure the 'gobble-uns' would take an ugly black thing like you before they would a little angel like Miss Lady."

"But I war jes' a-funnin', Miss Peps'. Dat ole devil *know* I war jes' a-funnin'; an' he ain't gwine ter tote me off w'en I ain't done no harm; 't ain't lak I war in earnest, yer know, Miss Peps'." And with this nice distinction Tite comforted herself and went on her way rejoicing.

About this time Madame Jozain was seized with a sudden spasm of piety and took to going to church again. However, she kept at a discreet distance from Father Ducros, who, at the time of the death of the young widow, had asked her some rather searching questions, and several times when he met her afterwards remarked that she seemed to have given up church-going. She was very glad, therefore, when about this time she heard that he had been sent to Cuba on a mission, which Madame hoped would detain him there always. One Sunday it occurred to her that she ought to take Lady Jane to church with her, and not allow her to grow up like a heathen; and besides, the child dressed in her best had such an air of distinction that she would add greatly to the elegant appearance Madame desired to make.

Pepsie had a knack of dressing Lady Jane as Madame never could; so the little girl was sent across the street to be made beautiful, with flowing glossy hair and dainty raiment. And when Madame, dressed in one of the young widow's elegant mourning suits, somewhat changed to better suit her age and position, leading Lady Jane by the hand with a gentle maternal air, limped slowly up the broad aisle of the Cathedral, she felt perfectly satisfied with herself and her surroundings.

Lady Jane had never been in a church before, and the immense interior, the grand, solemn notes of the organ, and the heavenly music of the choir made a deep and lasting impression upon her, and opened up to her new vistas of life through which her pure little soul longed to stray.

The musical nature is often a religious nature, and in the child was a deep vein of piety, which only needed working to produce the richest results; therefore, the greatest of all her pleasures from that time was to go to church and listen to the music, and afterwards to tell Pepsie of all she had seen and enjoyed, and to repeat, as far as it was possible with her small, sweet voice, the heavenly strains of the anthems she had heard.

Chapter XIX

MARDI-GRAS

One morning — it was the day before "Mardi-Gras" — when Lady Jane entered Pepsie's room, instead of finding her friend engaged in her usual occupation, the table was cleared of all that pertained to business, and on it was spread a quantity of pink cambric, which Pepsie was measuring and snipping with great gravity.

"Oh, Pepsie, what are you making?" cried Lady Jane, greatly surprised at this display of finery.

"It 's a domino," replied Pepsie curtly, her mouth full of pins.

"A domino, a domino," repeated Lady Jane. "What 's a domino? I never saw one."

"Of course, you never saw one, because you never saw a 'Mardi-gras,'" said Pepsie, removing the pins, and smiling to herself as she smoothed the pattern on the cloth.

"Mardi-gras! Is it for Mardi-gras?" asked Lady Jane eagerly. "You might tell me all about it. I don't know what it 's for," she added, much puzzled, and somewhat annoyed at Pepsie's air of secrecy.

"Well, it 's for some one to wear, Mardi-gras," replied Pepsie, still smiling serenely, and with an exasperating air of mystery.

"Oh, Pepsie — who, *who* is it for?" cried Lady Jane, pressing close, and putting both arms around her friend's neck; "tell me, please, do! If it 's a secret I won't tell."

"Oh, it 's for a little girl I know," said Pepsie, cutting and slashing the cambric with the greatest indifference, and evidently bent on keeping her own counsel.

Lady Jane stood still for a moment, letting her arms fall from Pepsie's neck. Her face was downcast, and something like a tear shone on her lashes; then, a little slowly and thoughtfully, she climbed into her chair on the other side of the table, and, leaning on her elbows, watched the absorbed Pepsie silently.

Pepsie pinned, and snipped, and smoothed, all the while smiling with that little air of unconcern which so puzzled the child. Presently, without looking up, she said:

"Can't you guess, Lady, who it 's for?"

"Is n't it for Sophie Paichoux?" ventured Lady Jane.

"No, no," said Pepsie decidedly; "the one I mean it for is n't any relation to me."

"Then, I don't know any other little girl. Oh, Pepsie, I can't guess."

"Why, you dear, stupid, little goose!" cried Pepsie, laughing aloud.

"Oh, Pepsie. It is n't! is it?" and Lady Jane's eyes shone like stars, and her face broke into a radiant smile. "Do you mean it for me? Really, do you, Pepsie?"

"Why, certainly. Who do you think I 'd make it for, if not for you?"

"Oh, you dear, darling Pepsie! But why did n't you say so just at first? Why — why did you make me," she hesitated for a word, and then added, "why did you make me — jealous?"

"I only wanted to tease you a little," laughed Pepsie. "I wanted to see if you 'd guess right off. I thought you 'd know right away that I did n't love any one else well enough to make a domino for her, and I wanted to try you, that was all."

This rather ambiguous explanation was quite satisfactory, and after a great many caresses Pepsie went on to tell that Tante Modeste had been there very early, and that she had invited Lady Jane to go in her milk-cart, that afternoon, up on Canal Street to see the King of the Carnival arrive. The cans were to be taken out of the cart, and an extra seat was to be put in, so that all the young ones could take part in the glorious spectacle.

Then Pepsie waited for Lady Jane to get her breath before she finished telling her of Tante Modeste's plans for the next day, the long-looked-for Mardi-gras.

The little Paichoux wanted Lady Jane to see everything; by some means she must take an active part in the festivities; she must be on Canal Street not as a spectator, but as an actor in the gay scene.

"Children don't enjoy it half as well, at least mine don't," said Tante Modeste, "if they 're cooped up in a cart, or on a gallery, so the best way is to put a domino on them, and turn them in with the crowd."

"But I 'm afraid for Lady," demurred Pepsie, "she might get frightened in such a crowd, or she might get lost."

"You need n't be afraid of that; Tiburce is going to take care of my young ones, and I 've told him that he must hold fast to the child all the time. Then, Tite can go too; I 've got an old domino that 'll do for her, and she can keep the child's hand fast on the other side. If they keep together, there 's no danger."

"But perhaps Madame Jozain won't allow her to go on Canal Street."

"Yes, she will, she 'll be glad to get rid of the care of the child. I just met her coming from market, she had a cream cheese for the little one. I guess she 's pretty good to her, when it does n't put her out. She says Madame Hortense, the milliner, on Canal Street, is an old friend of hers, and she 's invited her to come and sit on her gallery

"LADY JANE CLUNG TIGHTLY TO TIBURCE ON ONE SIDE AND TITE ON THE OTHER." (SEE P. 126.)

and see the show, and there 's no room for children, so she 'll be very glad to have her niece taken care of, and it 's so good of me, and all that. Oh dear, dear! I can't like that woman. I may be wrong, but she 's a dose I can't swallow," and Tante Modeste shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"But Lady 's got no domino," said Pepsie ruefully, "and I 'm afraid Madame Jozain won't make her one."

"Never mind saying anything to her about it. Here 's two bits. Send Tite for some cambric, and I 'll cut you a pattern in a minute. I 've made so many I know all about it, and, my dear, you can sew it up through the day. Have her ready by nine o'clock. I 'll be here by nine. I 'm going to take them all up in the cart and turn them out, and they can come back to me when they 're tired."

In this way Tante Modeste surmounted all difficulties, and the next morning Lady Jane, completely enveloped in a little pink domino, with a tiny pink mask carefully fastened over her rosy face, and her blue eyes wide with delight and wonder sparkling through the two holes, was lifted into the milk cart with the brood of little Paichoux, and with many good-byes to poor forlorn Pepsie and to Tony, who was standing dejectedly on one leg, the happy child was rattled away in the bright sunlight, through the merry, noisy crowd, to that center of every delight, Canal Street, on Mardi-gras.

There was no room for Tite Souris in the cart, so that dusky maiden, arrayed in the colors of a demon of darkness, an old red domino with black, bat-like wings, was obliged to take herself to the rendezvous, near the Clay statue, by whatever means of locomotion she could command. When the cart was passing Rue Royale, there was Tite in her uncanny disguise, flapping her black wings, and scuttling along as fast as her thin legs would carry her.

At last the excited party in the milk cart and the model for a diabolical flying machine were together under Tante Modeste's

severe scrutiny, listening with much-divided attention to her final instructions.

"Tiburce, attend to what I tell you," she said impressively; "you are the eldest of the party, and you must take care of the little ones, especially of Lady Jane; keep her hand in yours all the time, mind what I say—don't let go of her. And you, Tite, keep on the other side and hold her hand fast. Sophie, you can go in front with the two smallest, and the others can follow behind. Now keep together, and go along decently, no running or racketing on the street, and as soon as the procession passes, you had better come back to me. You will be tired and ready to go home. And Tite, remember what Miss Pepsie told you about Miss Lady. If you let anything happen to her, you 'd better go and drown yourself."

"THERE WERE DEMONS AND ANGELS, CLOWNS AND MONKS, IMPS AND FAIRIES." (SEE PAGE 127.)

Tite, with her wings poised for flight, promised everything, even to drowning herself if necessary; and before Tante Modeste had climbed into her cart the whole brood had disappeared amongst the motley crowd.

At first, Lady Jane was a little frightened at the noise and confusion; but she had a brave little heart, and clung tightly to Tiburce on one side and Tite on the other. In a few moments she was quite reassured and as happy as any of the merry little imps around her.

It was delightful; she seemed to be carried along in a stream of riotous life, all disguised and decorated to suit their individual fancies. There were demons and angels, clowns and monks, imps and fairies, animals and birds, fish and insects — in fact, everything that the richest imagination could devise.

At first, Tite Souris ambled along quite decorously, making now and then a little essay at flying with her one free wing, which gave her a curious one-sided appearance, provoking much mirth among the little Paichoux; but at length restraint became irksome, and finally impossible. She could bear it no longer, even if she died for it. Ignoring all her promises, and the awful reckoning in store for her, with one bound for freedom she tore herself from Lady Jane's clinging hand and, flapping her hideous wings, plunged into the crowd, and was instantly swallowed up in the vortex of humanity that whirled everywhere.

The procession was coming, the crowd grew very dense, and they were pulled, and pushed, and jostled; but still Tiburce, who was a strong, courageous boy, held his ground, and landed Lady Jane on a window-sill, where she could have a good view. The other Paichoux, under the generalship of Sophie, came up to form a guard, and so, in a very secure and comfortable position, in spite of Tite's desertion Lady Jane saw the procession of King Rex, and his royal household.

When Tiburce told her that the beautiful Bœuf gras, decorated so gaily with flowers and ribbons, would be killed and eaten afterward, she almost shed tears, and when he further informed her that King Rex was no King at all, only a citizen dressed as a King in satin and velvet, and feathers, she doubted it, and still clung to the illusion that he must sit always on a throne, and wear a crown, according to the traditions of Mr. Gex.

Now that the procession was over, all might have gone well if Tiburce had held out as he began; but alas! in an evil moment, he yielded to temptation and fell.

They were on their way back to Tante Modeste, quite satisfied with all they had seen, when they came upon a crowd gathered around the door of a fashionable club. From the balcony above a party of young men, who were more generous than wise, were throwing small

THE MARDI-GRAS PROCESSION. THE BŒUF GRAS. (SEE PAGE 127.)

change, dimes and nickels, into the crowd, that the rabble might scramble for them; and there right in the midst of the seething mass was Tite Souris, her domino hanging in rags, her wings gone, and her whole appearance very dilapidated and disorderly; but the demon of greed was gleaming in her eyes, and her teeth were showing in a

fierce, white line, while she plunged and struggled and battled for the root of all evil.

Tiburce's first intention was to make a detour of the crowd; but just as he was about to do so the gleam of a dime on the edge of the sidewalk caught his eye, and, overcome by the spirit of avarice, he forgot everything, and dropped Lady Jane's hand to make a dive for it.

Lady Jane never knew how it happened, but in an instant she was whirled away from the Paichoux, swept on with the crowd that a policeman was driving before him, and carried she knew not where.

At first she ran hither and thither, seizing upon every domino that bore the least resemblance to her companions, and calling Tiburce, Sophie, Nanette, in heartrending tones, until quite exhausted she sank down in a doorway, and watched the crowd surge past her.

Chapter XX

LADY JANE DINES WITH MR. GEX

For some time Lady Jane sat in the doorway, not knowing just what to do. She was very tired, and at first she was inclined to rest, thinking that Tiburce would come back and find her there; then when no one noticed her, and it seemed very long that she had waited, she felt inclined to cry; but she was a sensible, courageous little soul, and knew that tears would do no good; besides it was very uncomfortable, crying behind a mask. Her eyes burned, and her head ached, and she was hungry and thirsty, and yet Tiburce did n't come; perhaps they had forgotten her altogether, and had got into the milk-cart, and gone home.

This thought was too much to bear calmly, so she started to her feet, determined to try to find them if they were not coming to search for her.

She did not know which way to turn, for the crowd confused her terribly. Sometimes a rude imp in a domino would push her, or twitch her sleeve, and then, as frightened as a hunted hare, she would dart into the first doorway, and wait until her tormentor had passed. She was such a delicate little creature to be buffeted by a turbulent crowd, and had it not been for the disguise of the domino she would soon have found a protector amongst those she fled from.

After wandering around for some time, she found herself very near the spot she started from; and, thankful for the friendly shelter of the doorway, she slipped into it and sat down to think and rest. She wanted to take off her mask and cool her hot face, but she

did not dare to; for some reason she felt that her disguise was a protection; but how could any one find *her* when there were dozens of little figures flitting about in pink dominos?

While she sat there thinking and wondering what she should do, she noticed a carriage drive up to the next door, and two gentlemen got out, followed by a young man. When the youth turned his face toward her, she started up excitedly, and holding out her hands she cried out pitifully, "It 's me; it 's Lady Jane."

The young fellow glanced around him with a startled look; he heard the little cry, but did not catch the words, and it moved him strangely; he thought it sounded like some small creature in pain, but he only saw a little figure in a soiled pink domino standing in the next doorway, some little street gamin, he supposed, and without further notice he passed her, and followed his companions up the steps.

It was the boy who gave Lady Jane the blue heron, and he had passed her without seeing her; she had called to him, and he had not heard her. This was too much, she could not bear it, and withdrawing again into her retreat she sat down and burst into a passion of tears.

For a long while she cried silently, then she fell asleep and forgot for a time all her troubles. When she woke a rude man was pulling her to her feet, and telling her to wake up and go home; he had a stick and bright buttons on his coat. "A young one tired out and gone to sleep," he muttered, as he went on his way.

Then Lady Jane began to think that that place was no longer a safe refuge; the man with the stick might come back and beat her if she remained there, so she started out and crept along close to the high buildings. She wondered if it was near night, and what she should do when it got dark. Oh, if Tante Modeste, Tiburce, or Madelon would only come for her, or Tante Pauline,— even she would

be a welcome sight, and she would not run away from Raste, although she detested him; he pulled her hair and teased her, and called her "My Lady," but still if he should come just then she would not run away from him, she would ask him to take her home.

At that moment some one behind her gave her domino a violent pull, and she looked around wildly; an imp in yellow and black was following her. A strand of her bright hair had escaped from her hood and fallen over her back; he had it in his hand, and was using it as a rein. "Get up, my little nag," he was saying, in a rude, impertinent voice; "come, trot, trot." At first she tried to jerk her hair away; she was so tired and frightened that she could scarcely stand, but she turned on her tormentor and bade him leave her alone.

"I 'm going to pull off your mask," he said, "and see if you ain't Mary O'Brien." He made a clutch at her, but Lady Jane evaded it; all the spirit in her was aroused by this assault, and the usually gentle child was transformed into a little fury. "Don't touch me," she cried; "don't touch me,"—and she struck the yellow and black imp full in the face with all her strength.

Now this blow was the signal for a battle, in which Lady Jane was sadly worsted, for in a few moments the boy, who was older and of course stronger, had torn her domino from her in ribbons, had snatched off her mask, and pulled the hood from her head, which unloosened all her beautiful hair, allowing it to fall in a golden shower far below her waist, and there she stood with flashing eyes and burning cheeks, quivering and panting in the midst of a strange, rude crowd, like a little wild hunted animal suddenly brought to bay.

At that moment she saw some one leap on to the banquette, and with one well-aimed and dexterous kick send her enemy sprawling into the gutter, while all the bystanders shouted with laughter.

"SHE CRIED OUT PITIFULLY, 'IT 'S LADY JANE.'" (SEE PAGE 131.)

It was Gex, little Gex, who had come to her rescue, and never did fair lady cling with greater joy and gratitude to the knight who had delivered her from the claws of a dragon, than did Lady Jane to the little horny hand of the ancient professeur of the dance.

For a moment she could not speak; she was so exhausted with her battle and so overcome with delight that she had no voice to express her feelings.

Gex understood the situation, and with great politeness and delicacy led her into a pharmacy near, smoothed her disordered dress and hair, and gave her a glass of soda.

This so revived the little lady that she found voice to say: "Oh, Mr. Gex, how did you know where I was?"

"I did n't, I did n't," replied Gex tremulously. "It vas vhat you call one accident. I vas just going down the Rue Royale, vas just turning the corner, I vas on my vay home. I 'd finished my Mardi-gras, all I vant of the noise and foolishness, and I vas going back to Rue des Bons Enfants, vhen I hears one leetle girl cry out, and I look and saw the yellow devil pull down my leetle lady's hair. Oh, *bon*, *bon*, did n't I give him one blow! — did n't I send him in the gutter flying!" — and Gex rubbed his hands and chuckled with delight. "And how lucky vas I to have one accident to find my leetle lady, vhen she vas in trouble!"

Then Lady Jane and Mr. Gex turned down Rue Royale, and while she skipped along holding his hand, her troubles all forgotten, she told him how it happened that she had been separated from Tiburce, and of all her subsequent misadventures.

Presently, Gex stopped before a neat little restaurant, whose window presented a very tempting appearance, and, looking at Lady Jane with a broad, inviting smile, said, "I should like to know if my leetle lady vas hungry. It is past four of the clock, and I should like to give my leetle lady von Mardi-gras dinner."

"Oh thank you, Mr. Gex," cried Lady Jane, delightedly, for the smell of the savory food appealed to her empty stomach. "I 'm so hungry that I can't wait until I get home."

"Vell, you shan't; this is one nice place, vairy *chic* and fashionable, fit for one leetle lady, and you shall see that Gex can order one fine dinner, as vell as teach the dance."

When the quaint little old man, in his antiquated black suit, a relic of other and better days, entered the room, with the beautiful child, rosy and bareheaded, her yellow hair flying out like spun silk, and her dainty though disordered dress plainly showing her superior position, every eye was turned upon him, and Gex felt the stirrings of old pride and ambition, as he placed a chair with great ceremony, and lifted Lady Jane into it. Then he drew out his spectacles with much dignity, and, taking the card the waiter handed him, waited, pencil poised, for the orders of the young lady.

"If you please," he said, with a formal bow, and an inviting smile, "to tell me vhat you prefair."

Lady Jane frowned and bit her lips at the responsibility of deciding so important a matter; at length she said, with sparkling eyes and a charming smile:

"If you please, Mr. Gex, I 'll take some — some ice cream."

"But first, my leetle lady,— but first, one leetle *plat* of soup, and the fish with *sauce verte*, and one leetle bird,— just one leetle bird vith the *petit pois*,— and one fine, good, leetle salad. How vould that suit my leetle lady?"

"And ice cream?" questioned Lady Jane, leaning forward with her little hands clasped primly in her lap.

"And after, yes, one *crême à la glace*, one cake, and one leetle bunch of *raisin*, grape you say," repeated Gex, as he wrote laboriously with his old, stiff fingers. "Now ve vill have one fine leetle dinner, my leetle lady," he said, with a beaming smile, when he had completed the order.

Lady Jane nodded an affirmative, and while they waited for their dinner her bright eyes traveled over everything; at length they rested on Mr. Gex with unbounded admiration, and she could not refrain from leaning forward and whispering:

"Oh, Mr. Gex, how nice, how lovely you look! Please, Mr. Gex, *please* don't wear an apron any more."

"Vell, if my leetle lady don't vant me to, vell, I von't," replied Gex, beaming with sudden ambition and pride, "and, perhaps, I vill try to be one fine leetle gentleman again, like vhen I vas professeur of the dance."

Chapter XXI

AFTER THE CARNIVAL

It was nearly dark, and the day had been very long to Pepsie, sitting alone at her window, for Madelon must remain all day and until late at night on the Rue Bourbon. A holiday, and especially Mardi-gras, was a day of harvest for her, and she never neglected a chance to reap nickels and dimes; therefore Pepsie began to look anxiously for the return of the merry party in the milk-cart. She knew they were not to remain to see the night procession; at least, that had not been the intention of Tante Modeste when she left, and she could not imagine what had detained them. And Tite Souris,— ungrateful creature! had been told to return as soon as the procession was over, in order to get Pepsie's dinner. Owing to the excitement of the morning, Pepsie had eaten nothing, and now she was very hungry, as well as lonesome; and even Tony, tired of waiting, was hopping about restlessly, straining at his cord, and pecking the floor viciously.

Madame Jozain had returned some time before, and was even then eating her dinner comfortably. Pepsie had called across to know if she had seen anything of the Paichoux and Lady Jane; but madame had answered stiffly that she had been in her friend's gallery all the time, which was an intimation that she had been in no position to notice a milk-cart, or its occupants. Then she observed indifferently that Madame Paichoux had probably decided to remain on Canal Street in order to get good positions for the night procession.

Pepsie comforted herself somewhat with this view of the case, and then began to worry about the child's fast. She was sure Tante Modeste had nothing in the cart for the children to eat, and on Mardi-gras there was such a rush that one could hardly get into a restaurant, and she doubted whether Tante Modeste would try with such a crowd of young ones to feed. At length when she had thought of every possible reason for their remaining so late, and every possible plan by which they could be fed, she began to think of her own hunger, and of Tite Souris's neglect, and had worked herself up to a very uneviable state of mind, when she saw her ungrateful handmaid plunging across the street, looking like a much-abused scarecrow, the remnants of her tatters flying in the wind, and her long black legs, owing to the unexpected abbreviation of her skirts, longer and thinner than ever, while her comical black face wore an expression impossible to describe.

"Oh, Miss Peps'," she gasped, bursting into Pepsie's presence like a whirlwind, "Ma'm Paichoux done sont me on ahead ter tell yer how Miss Lady 's done got lost."

"Lost, lost?" cried Pepsie, clasping her hands wildly and bursting into tears. "How, where?"

"Up yon'er, on Cunnul Street. We's can't find 'er nowhar."

"Then you must have let go of her," cried Pepsie, while her eyes flashed fire. "I told you not to let go of her."

"Oh laws, Miss Peps', we's could n't holp it in dat dar scrimmage; peoples done bus' us right apart, an' Miss Lady 's so littl' her han' jes slip outen mine. I'se tried ter hole on, but 't ain't no use."

"And where was Tiburce? Did he let go of her too?"

"He war dar, but Lor! he could n't holp it, Mars' Tiburce could n't, no more en me."

"You 've broken my heart, Tite, and if you don't go and find her I 'll hate you always. Mind what I say, I 'll hate you forever,"

and Pepsie thrust out her long head and set her teeth in a cruel way.

"Oh laws, honey! Oh laws, Miss Peps', dey 's all a-lookin', dey 's gwine bring 'er back soon; doan't git scart, dat chile 's all right."

"'GO AND LOOK FOR HER; DON'T STAND THERE GLARING AT ME. GO, I SAY!' AND PEPSIE RAISED HER NUTCRACKER THREATENINGLY."

"Go and look for her; go and find her! Mind what I tell you; bring her back safe or—" Here Pepsie threw herself back in her

chair and fairly writhed. "Oh, oh! and I must stay here and not do anything, and that darling is lost, lost! — out in the streets alone, and nearly dark. Go, go and look for her; don't stand there glaring at me. *Go*, I say," and Pepsie raised her nutcracker threateningly.

"Yes, Miss Peps', yes, I 'll bring 'er back shore," cried Tite, dodging an imaginary blow, as she darted out, her rags and tatters flying after her.

When she had gone Pepsie could do nothing but strain her eyes in the gathering darkness, and wring her hands and weep. She saw the light and the fire in Madame Jozain's room, but the door was closed because the evening was chilly, and the street seemed deserted. There was no one to speak to; she was alone in the dark little room with only Tony, who rustled his feathers in a ghostly sort of way, and *toned* dismally.

Presently, she heard the sound of wheels, and peering out saw Tante Modeste's milk-cart; her heart gave a great bound. How foolish she was to take on in such a wild way; they had found her, she was there in the cart, safe and sound; but instead of Lady Jane's blithe little voice she heard her Uncle Paichoux, and in an instant Tante Modeste entered with a very anxious face.

"She has n't come home, has she?" were Tante Modeste's first words.

"Oh, oh!" sobbed Pepsie, "then you have n't brought her?"

"Don't cry, child, don't cry, we 'll find her now. When I saw I could n't do anything, I took the young ones home, and got your uncle. I said, 'If I have Paichoux, I 'll be able to find her.' We 're going right to the police. I dare say they 've found her, or know where she is."

"You know I told you —" moaned Pepsie, "you know I was afraid she 'd get lost."

"Yes, yes; but I thought I could trust Tiburce. The boy will never get over it; he told me the truth, thank Heaven; he said he just let go her hand for one moment, and there was such a crowd. If that fly-away of a Tite had kept on the other side it would n't have happened, but she ran off as soon as they got on the street."

"I thought so. I 'll pay her off," said Pepsie vindictively.

"Come, come, Modeste," called Paichoux from the door, "let 's be starting."

"Oh, uncle!" cried Pepsie, imploringly, "do find Lady Jane."

"Certainly, child, certainly, I 'll find her. I 'll have her back here in an hour or so. Don't cry. It 's nothing for a young one to get lost Mardi-gras; I dare say there are a dozen at the police stations now, waiting for their people to come and get them."

Just at that moment there was a sound of voices without, and Pepsie exclaimed: "That 's Lady Jane. I heard her speak." Sure enough, the sweet, high-pitched little voice chattering merrily could be distinctly heard; and at the same instant Tite Souris burst into the room, exclaiming:

"Her 's here, Miss Peps', bress der Lor'! I 's done found her"; and following close was Lady Jane, still holding fast to little Gex.

"Oh, Pepsie! Oh, I was lost!" she cried, springing into her friend's arms. "I was lost, and Mr. Gex found me; and I struck a boy in the face, and he tore off my domino and mask, and I did n't know what to do, when Mr. Gex came and kicked him into the gutter. Did n't you, Mr. Gex?"

"Just to think of it!" cried Tante Modeste, embracing her, and almost crying over her, while Paichoux was listening to the modest account of the rescue, from the ancient dancing-master.

"And I had dinner with Mr. Gex," cried Lady Jane joyfully; "such a lovely dinner — ice cream, and grapes — and cake!"

"And one leetle bird, vith a vairy fine salad, my leetle lady,—vas n't it — one vairy nice leetle bird?" interrupted Gex, who was unwilling to have his fine dinner belittled.

"Oh, yes; bird, and fish, and soup," enumerated Lady Jane, "and peas, Pepsie, little peas."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* oh, leetle lady!" cried Gex, holding up his hands in horror, "you have it vairy wrong. It vas soup, and fish, and bird. M. Paichoux, you see the leetle lady does not vell remember; and you must not think I can't order one vairy fine dinner."

"I understand," said Paichoux, laughing. "I 've no doubt, Gex, but what you could order a dinner fit for an alderman."

"Thank you, thank you, vairy much," returned Gex, as he bowed himself out and went home to dream of his triumphs.

Chapter XXII

PAICHOUX MAKES A PURCHASE

"Just to think," said Pepsie to her mother, the next morning, "Madame Jozain was n't the least anxious last night about Lady. I don't believe she cares for the child, or she 'd never be willing to let her stay away from her the most of the time, as she does. She 's always fussing about her great, overgrown son, if *he 's* out of her sight."

"And no wonder," returned Madelon. "Poor woman, she has trouble enough with him. She keeps it to herself and pretends to be proud of him; but, my dear, he 's a living disgrace to her. I often hear him spoken of on the Rue Bourbon; he dresses fine and never works. Where does he get his money, *ma petite?* If people are poor and don't work they must steal. They may call it by some other name, but I call it stealing. Madame Jozain can't make money enough in that little shop to support herself and keep that boy in idleness. We must n't be too hard on her. She has trouble enough, I can see it in her face; she looks worn out with worry. And we 'll do all we can for that little darling. It 's a pleasure; she 's so sweet and grateful. I only wish I could do more. I 'd work my fingers to the bone for you two, my darling."

"*Bonne maman*," said Pepsie, clinging to her neck, and kissing her fondly, "have you thought of what I asked you — have you, mama?"

"Yes, my dear, I have, I 've thought of it a great deal; but I don't see my way clear quite yet."

"Why, you 've got the money in the bank, mama?"

"I can't touch that money, my dear; it 's for you. If anything should happen to me, and you were left alone."

"Hush, hush, mama; I should n't need any money then, for I should die too."

"No, my dear, not if it was the good God's will that you should live. I don't want to spend that; I want to feel that you 've something. A piano costs a great deal of money; besides, what would your uncle and aunt think if I should do such a thing?"

"They 'd think you did it because *I* wanted you to," returned Pepsie slyly.

"That would be a reason certainly," said Madelon, laughing, "and I 'll try to do it after a while. Have a little patience, dear, and I think I can manage it without touching the money in the bank."

"Oh, I hope you can, mama, because Mam'selle Diane says Lady learns very fast, and that she ought to practise. I hate to have her kept back for the need of a piano, and Madame Jozain will never get one for her. You know you could sell it afterward, mama,"— and Pepsie went on to show, with much excellent reasoning, that Lady Jane could never make a great *prima donna* unless she had advantages. "It 's now, while her fingers are supple, that they must be trained; she ought to practise two hours a day. Oh, I 'd rather go without the money than to have Lady kept back. Try, *bonne maman*, try to get a piano very soon, won't you?"

And Madelon promised to try, for she was devoted to the child; but Pepsie had begun to think that Lady Jane was her own—her very own, and, in her generous affection, was willing to sacrifice everything for her good.

And Madelon and Pepsie were not the only ones who planned and hoped for the little one with almost a mother's love and interest.

From the first day that Lady Jane smiled up into the sad, worn face of Diane d'Hautreve, a new life had opened to that lonely woman, a new hope, a new happiness brightened her dreary days; for the child's presence seemed to bring sunshine and youth to her. Had it not been for her mother, she would have kept the gentle little creature with her constantly, as the sweetest hours she knew, or had known for many a weary year, were those she devoted to her lovely little pupil. It was a dream of delight to sit at the tinkling piano with Lady Jane nestled close to her side, the sweet, liquid notes mingling with hers, as they sang an old-fashioned ballad, or a tender lullaby. And the child never disappointed her; she was always docile and thoughtful, and so quiet and polite that even Diane's mother, captious and querulous though she was, found no cause for complaint, while the toleration with which she had at first received Lady Jane was fast changing into affection. The more they became interested in her, the more they wondered how she could be kin to such a woman as Madame Jozain; for Mam'selle Diane had been obliged to show how exclusive she could be in order to keep madame where she belonged.

At first Madame Jozain had annoyed them greatly by trying to intrude upon their seclusion; and it had taken several polite, but unmistakable rebuffs to teach her that they were d'Hautreves, and that the child would be received gladly where the aunt must not expect to enter.

Madame swallowed her mortification and said nothing, but she bided her time to take her revenge. "*I 'll* show them before long that I know how poor they are; and that funny little story I got out of Tite Souris, about Mam'selle Diane cleaning her banquette with a veil over her face — every one in the neighborhood shall know it. Poor, proud, old thing, she thought she could insult me and I would n't resent it!"

And while Madame was planning her little revenge, and rehearsing her grievances to herself, Madame d'Hautreve and Mam'selle Diane were wondering if something could n't be done to get the child out of the clutches of such an aunt.

"It seems dreadful," Mam'selle Diane would say, sadly, "to leave her with that woman. I can't think she has any right to her; there 's a mystery about it, and it ought to be investigated. Oh, mama dear, if we had some money I 'd hire a lawyer to find out. If she really is the child's next-of-kin, I suppose she has a legal right to her, and that no one could oblige her to relinquish that right; but one might *buy* the child; I think she is just the woman to be moved by money. Oh, mama, if our claim had only gone through! If we 'd only got what we ought to have had, I would try—if you had no objections—to get the child."

"Dear, dear, Diane, how absurd you are! What would you do with her?"

"Why, you could adopt her, mama, and I could have the care of her."

"But, my child, that is all romancing. We have no money, and we never shall have any. It is useless to think of that claim, it will never be considered; and even if we had money, it would be a great risk to take a child we know nothing of. I think with you that there 's some mystery, and I should like to have it looked into, yet I don't think it 's worth while worrying about; we have troubles enough of our own."

"Oh, mama, we need not be selfish because we are poor," said Diane, gently.

"We can't help it, child; selfishness is one of the results of poverty. It is self, self, constantly; but *you* are an exception, Diane. I will give you the credit of thinking more of others' interest than of your own. You show it in everything. Now, about that bird.

Madame Jourdain should have paid you for it, and not thrown it on your hands."

"Oh, mama, she could n't sell it," said Mam'selle Diane, dejectedly. "It would n't be right to expect her to lose the price of it. She says it did n't 'take' as well as the ducks."

"Well, she might have thrown in the wool," insisted Madame d'Hautreve, querulously, "she might have given the wool against your time."

"But she did n't ask me to experiment with a new model, mama dear. It was n't her fault if I did n't succeed."

"You *did* succeed, Diane. It was perfect; it was most life-like, only people have n't the taste to recognize your talent."

"Madame Jourdain said that her customers did n't like the bird's bill, and they thought the neck too long," returned Mam'selle Diane, humbly.

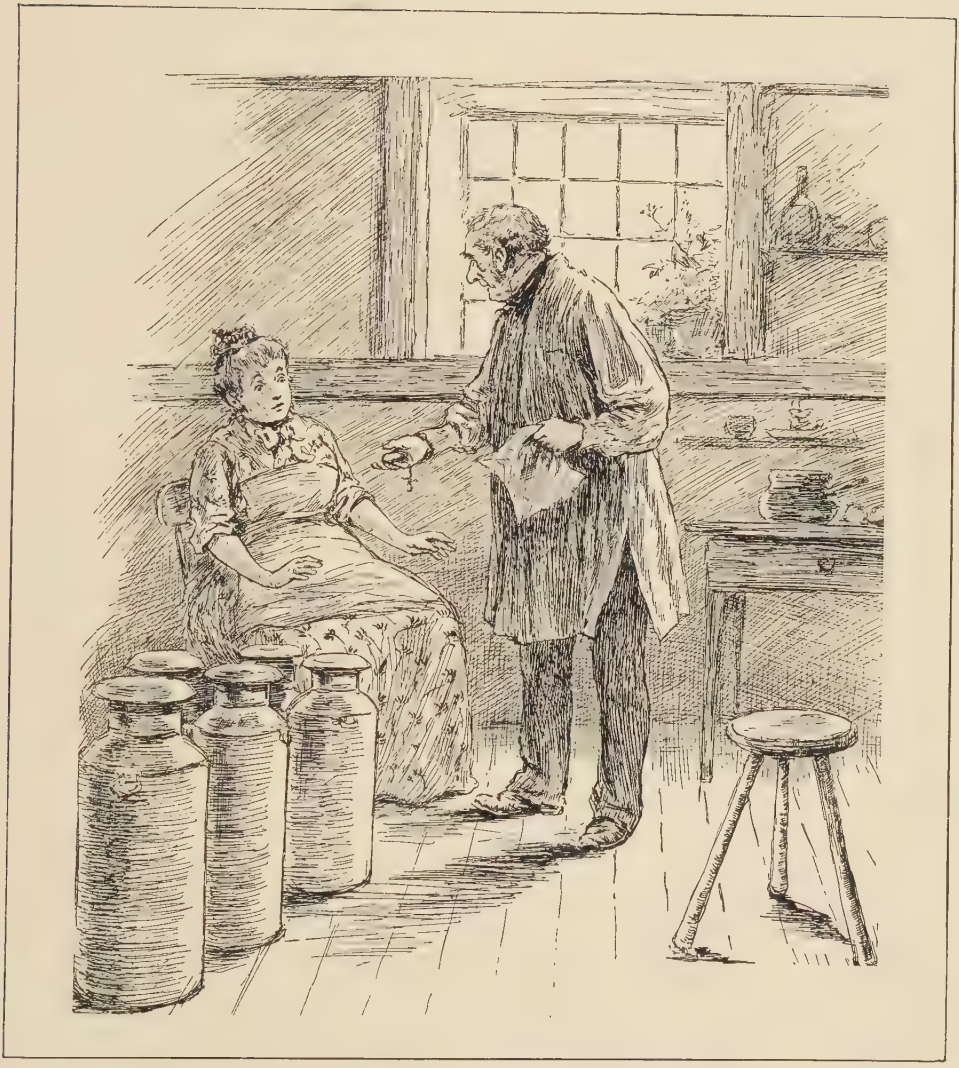
"There, there; that shows how little the best educated people know of ornithology. It is a species of crane; the neck is not out of proportion."

"They thought so, mama, and one can't contend with people's tastes and opinions. I shall not try anything new again. I shall stick to my ducks and canaries."

"You know I advised you to do so in the first place. You were too ambitious, Diane, you were too ambitious!"

"Yes; you are right, mama, I was too ambitious!" sighed Mam'selle Diane.

One morning in August, about a year from the time that Madame Jozain moved into Good Children Street, Tante Modeste was in her dairy, deep in the mysteries of cream-cheese and butter, when Paichoux entered, and laying a small parcel twisted up in a piece of newspaper before her waited for her to open it.



"'WHY, PAPA, WHERE IN THE WORLD DID YOU GET THIS?' SAID MODESTE."

"In a moment," she said, smiling brightly; "let me fill these molds first, then I 'll wash my hands, and I 'm done for to-day."

Paichoux made no reply, but walked about the dairy, peering into the pans of rich milk, and whistling softly.

Suddenly, Tante Modeste uttered an exclamation of surprise. She had opened the paper, and was holding up a beautiful watch by its exquisitely wrought chain.

"Why, papa, where in the world did you get this?" she asked, as she turned it over and over, and examined first one side and then the other. "Blue enamel, a band of diamonds on the rim, a leaf in diamonds on one side, a monogram on the other. What are the letters?—the stones sparkle so, I can hardly make them out. J, yes, it 's a J, and a C. Why, those are the very initials on that child's clothes! Paichoux, where did you get this watch, and whose is it?"

"Why, it 's mine," replied Paichoux, with exasperating coolness. He was standing before Tante Modeste, with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, whistling in his easy way. "It 's mine, and I bought it."

"Bought it! Where did you buy a watch like this, and wrapped up in newspaper, too? Do tell me where you got it, Paichoux," cried Tante Modeste, very much puzzled, and very impatient.

"I bought it in the Recorder's Court."

"In the Recorder's Court?" echoed Tante Modeste, more and more puzzled. "From whom did you buy it?"

"From Raste Jozain."

Tante Modeste looked at her husband with wide eyes and parted lips, and said nothing for several seconds; then she exclaimed, "I told you so!"

"Told me what?" asked Paichoux, with a provoking smile.

"Why, why, that all those things marked J. C. were stolen from that child's mother; and this watch is a part of the same property, and she never was a Jozain—"

"Not so fast, Modeste; not so fast."

"Then, what was Raste Jozain in the Recorder's Court for?"

"He was arrested on suspicion, but they could n't prove anything."

"For this?" asked Tante Modeste, looking at the watch.

"No, it was another charge, but his having such a valuable watch went against him. It seems like a providence, my getting it. I just happened to be passing the Recorder's Court, and, glancing in, I saw that precious rascal in the dock. I knew him, but he did n't know me. So I stepped in to see what the scrape was. It seems that he was arrested on the suspicion of being one of a gang who have robbed a number of jewelry stores. They could n't prove anything against him on that charge; but the watch and chain puzzled the Recorder like the mischief. He asked Raste where he got it, and he was ready with his answer, 'It belonged to my cousin who died some time ago; she left it to my mother, and my mother gave it to me."

"'What was her name?' asked the Recorder.

"'Claire Jozain,' the scamp answered promptly.

"'But this is J. C.,' said the Recorder, examining the letters closely. 'I should certainly say that the J. came first. What do you think, gentlemen?' and he handed the watch to his clerk and some others; and they all thought from the arrangement of the letters that it was J. C., and while this discussion was going on, the fellow stood there smiling as impudent and cool as if he was the first gentleman in the city. He 's a handsome fellow, and well dressed, and the image of his father. Any one who had ever seen Andre Jozain would know that Raste was his son, and he 's in a fair way to end his days in Andre's company."

"And they could n't find out where he got the watch?" interrupted Tante Modeste impatiently.

"No, they could n't prove that it was stolen. However, the Recorder gave him thirty days in the parish prison as a suspicious character."

"They ought not to have let him off so easily," said Tante Modeste decidedly.

"But you know they could n't prove anything," continued Paichoux, "and the fellow looked blue at the prospect of thirty days. I guess he felt that he was getting it pretty heavy. However, he put on lots of brass and began talking and laughing with some flashy-looking fellows who gathered around him. They saw the watch was valuable, and that there was a chance for a bargain, and one of them made him an offer of fifty dollars for it. 'Do you think I 'm from the West?' he asked, with a grin, and shoved it back into his pocket; 'I 'm pretty hard up, I need the cash badly; but I can't *give* you this ticker, as much as I love you.' Then another fellow offered him sixty, and he shook his head. 'No, no, that 's nowhere near the figure.'

"'Let me look at the watch,' I said, sauntering up. 'If it 's a good watch I 'll make you an offer.' I spoke as indifferently as possible, because I did n't want him to think I was anxious, and I was n't quite sure whether he knew me or not. As he handed me the watch he eyed me impudently, but I saw that he was nervous and shaky. 'It 's a good watch,' I said after I examined it closely; 'a very good watch, and I 'll give you seventy-five.'

"'No, you don't, old hayseed; hand it here.' I was so taken aback at his calling me hayseed — you see, Modeste, I had on my blouse," and Paichoux looked a little guilty while referring to his toilet.

"Well, papa, have n't I told you not to go up-town in your blouse?" said Tante Modeste sharply. "I should think now, for Marie's sake, that you would wear a coat; the Guiots all wear coats."

"Oh, never mind that. I don't. I 'm an honest man, and I can afford to wear a blouse anywhere. I did n't take any notice of his

impudence, but I offered him a hundred. You see I happened to have the money with me. I was on my way to pay Lenotre for those last Jerseys I bought from him, so I took my wallet out and began counting the bills. That brought him; the fellow needed the money, and he wanted to get rid of the watch. If I had n't thought that there was something crooked about it, my conscience would n't have let me take such a valuable thing for such a price, but I considered the child. I thought it might be all the proof that we would ever have if anything came up, and in any case it 's money well invested for her."

"You did right to buy it, Paichoux. It 's a good deal of money for a watch, especially just now, when we have to get so much for Marie; but if we can do anything for that darling by having it, I don't mind." And Tante Modeste sat for some time looking intently at the beautiful, sparkling object that lay on her white apron.

"I wish it could speak," she said at length; "I wish it could speak."

"I mean to make it by and by," returned Paichoux decidedly.

"But now, at this moment, what a story it could tell if it had a voice! Well, I 'm glad we 've got it out of that scamp's clutches."

"So am I," returned Paichoux, opening the case as he spoke and showing Tante Modeste something on the inside of it. "I can get a trace through this, or I 'm mistaken; but put it away now in my safe, and say nothing about it,—I don't want even Madelon to know that we 've got it, and, Modeste, whenever you see that woman, be on the alert for something that will give us a clue."

"Oh, Paichoux, you don't know her. She 's as close as the grave, and too cunning to betray herself. I 'm always watching her, and I mean to keep on; but I don't think it 's any use. I wish we could employ a detective to unravel the mystery."

"Yes, yes; but that would cost a good deal, Modeste; let 's wait awhile, something 's going to turn up to put us on the right track."

"And in the mean while the poor little darling is in the power of that woman. The child never complains, but my heart aches for her. She has changed this summer; she looks thin and weak, and that woman takes no more care of her than she would of a dog. If it was n't for Madelon and Pepsie, and Mam'selle d'Hautreve, the little creature would suffer; and our good milk that I send to Madelon has helped her through the hot weather. Pepsie herself goes without, to give it to the child. If the sweet little thing had n't made friends, she would have perished."

"Let her come down here and play with our young ones; there 's room enough," said Paichoux good-naturedly, "and she 's no more trouble than a bird hopping about."

"I wanted to have her, but madame won't let her come; she 's taken it in her head to keep the child shut up most of the time. Pepsie and Mam'selle Diane complain that they don't have her as often as they 'd like to. I think she 's afraid that the child may talk. You see she 's getting older, and she may remember more than madame likes her to."

"Well," said Paichoux deliberately, "I 've made a plan, and by and by I 'm going to put it in operation. Just keep quiet and wait until I 'm ready to put my plan in operation."

And Tante Modeste promised to wait.

Chapter XXIII

MADAME JOZAIN CALLS UPON MAM'SELLE DIANE

It was somewhere about the time that Paichoux bought the watch when Mam'selle Diane was surprised one morning by a visit from Madame Jozain, who entered the little green gate with an air of haughty severity and insolent patronage that was insufferable; and she had evidently come on business, for, after the first formalities had passed between them, she drew a well-filled purse from her pocket and asked in a lofty tone if Mam'selle Diane had her bill prepared.

"My bill, Madame Jozain? What bill?" said Mam'selle Diane, looking at her with cold surprise. "I am not aware that you owe me anything."

"I owe you for teaching Lady Jane music; you 've been giving her lessons now for some months, and I 'm sure you must need your money."

"Oh, Madame," gasped Mam'selle Diane, "you are laboring under a mistake. I never thought of receiving money for the pleasure I have had with the child. I offered to teach her. It was my own offer. You surely did not think that I expected to be paid?"

"I certainly did. Why should you teach her for nothing when I am able to pay?" returned madame haughtily, while she fingered her roll of notes. "In your circumstances you can't afford to throw away your time, and I 'm quite willing to pay you the usual price. You 're a very good teacher, and I 'm very well satisfied with the child's progress."

For a moment, Mam'selle Diane was quite overcome by the woman's insolence. Then, remembering that she was a d'Hautreve, she drew herself up, and said calmly and without the least hauteur, "I regret, Madame, that you thought me a teacher of music. I make

"MAM'SELLE DIANE SAID CALMLY, 'I REGRET, MADAME, THAT YOU THOUGHT ME A TEACHER OF MUSIC.'"

no claim to any professional knowledge, therefore I could not take the pay of a teacher. I thank you very much, but I am not a teacher."

"It does n't matter. I insist on paying you." And madame held out a bank-note for such a large amount that Mam'selle Diane's eyes were fairly dazzled.

"I assure you it is impossible," said Diane gently. "It is useless to discuss the matter. Will you permit me to open the gate for you?"

"Very well, then," exclaimed madame, hotly. "I sha'n't allow my niece to come here again. I won't accept favors from any one. She shall have a teacher that is n't too proud to take pay."

"I hope you will not deprive us of the pleasure of seeing Lady Jane. We are very fond of her," said Mam'selle Diane, almost humbly, while the tears gathered on her eyelashes. "Of course you must do as you think best about the lessons."

"I sha'n't allow her to run about the neighborhood any more," replied madame, tartly; "she 's losing her pretty manners. I shall keep her with me in the future," and with this small parting thrust and a curt good-morning she went out of the little green gate, and left Mam'selle Diane to close it behind her with a very heavy heart.

The interview had taken place on the gallery, and Madame d'Hautreve had heard but little from her bed. "Diane, what did that woman want? What sent her here at this hour?" quavered the old lady sharply.

"She came on business, mama," replied Mam'selle Diane, brushing away a tear.

"Business, business; I hope you have no business with her."

"She pretended to think I expected to be paid for the lessons I have given Lady Jane."

Madame groaned. "I told you we would regret opening our doors to that child."

"Oh, mama, I don't regret it. I only regret that I have lost the pleasure of seeing her. Madame Jozain will not allow her to come any more."

"Ungrateful creature, to insult you after your condescension."

"Mama, she did n't insult me," interrupted Mam'selle Diane, proudly. "Must I remind *you* that I am above her insolence?"

"True, my dear, true, and I hope you made her feel that she is a Jozain."

"I did n't wish to be unkind to her, mama. Perhaps she is not so wrong after all. Sometimes I think it would have been better to have let our friends know our real circumstances. Then they would have helped me to get pupils, and I could have earned more teaching music than I can making penwipers, and I am sure it would be more respectable and more agreeable."

"Oh, Diane, you surprise me," cried Madame d'Hautreve, tremulously. "Think of it! a granddaughter of the Counts d'Hautreve and d'Orgenois teaching the children of grocers and bakers to play the piano. No, no; I would rather bury myself here and die in poverty than disgrace our name in that way."

Mam'selle Diane made no reply, and after a few moments madame turned on her pillow to finish her morning nap. Then the last of the d'Hautreves went into the little garden, and drawing on a pair of old gloves she dug and trimmed and trained her flowers for some time, and afterwards gathered up the small piles of seeds from the white papers.

"Oh, oh!" she said wearily, seeing how few they were, "even the flowers refuse to seed this year."

After she had finished her work in the garden, she went dejectedly back to the little room where her mother still slept, and opening a drawer in her armoire she took out a small box. She sighed heavily as she raised the lid. Inside on a blue velvet lining lay a slender bracelet set with turquoises and diamonds. "It must go," she said sadly to herself. "I have kept it till the last. I hoped I would n't be obliged to part with it, but I must. I can't let poor mama know how needy we are. It 's the only thing I can spare without telling her.

Yes, I must give it up. I must ask Madame Jourdain to dispose of it for me." Then she sat for a long time looking at it silently, while the hot tears fell on the blue velvet. At last, with a sigh, she bravely wiped her eyes, and laid the little box under the ducklings in the black basket.

For more than a week Mam'selle Diane did not see Lady Jane, and the poor woman's eyes had a suspicious look of tears, as she went about her duties, silent and dejected. Her only pleasure was no longer a pleasure; she could not go near the piano for some days. At last, one evening, she sat down and began to play and sing a little song she had taught the child, when suddenly she heard, outside the window, the sweet treble voice she loved so well.

"It 's Lady Jane!" she cried, and springing up so hastily that she upset the piano-stool she grappled with the rusty bolts of the shutters, and, for the first time in years, threw them boldly open, and there stood the child, hugging her bird to her breast, her wan little face lit up with her sparkling eyes and bright, winsome smile.

Mam'selle Diane went down on her knees, and Lady Jane clung to her neck and kissed her rapturously over and over.

"Diane, Diane, what are you thinking of, to open that shutter in the face of every one?" said the old lady feebly.

But Mam'selle Diane did not hear her mother; she was in an ecstasy of happiness, with the child's soft lips pressed to her faded cheek.

"Tante Pauline says I must n't come in," whispered Lady Jane, between her kisses, "and I must mind what she says."

"Yes, darling, you must obey her."

"I 've been here every day listening, and I have n't heard you sing before."

"Dear child, I could n't sing; I missed you so I could n't sing."

"Don't cry, Mam'selle Diane; I love you dearly. Don't cry, and I 'll come every day to the window. Tante Pauline won't be angry at that."

"I don't know, my dear; I 'm afraid she will."

"Diane, close that window instantly," cried Madame d'Hautreve, quite beside herself. "A pretty exhibition you 're making before all the neighbors, on your knees crying over that child."

"Good-by, darling; come sometimes. Mama don't like me to open the window, but I 'll open the gate and speak to you," said Diane, hastily returning to herself and the exigencies of her position.

"Forgive me, mama, I really could n't help it, I was so glad to see the child," and Mam'selle Diane closed the window with a brighter face than she had shown for several days.

"I think you must be insane, Diane, I surely think you must be, to let all these common people know that a *blanchisseuse de fin* will not allow her child to come into our house, and that you are obliged to go on your knees and reach out of the window to embrace her. Oh, Diane, Diane, for the first time you 've forgotten that you 're a d'Hautreve!"

Chapter XXIV

RASTE THE PRODIGAL

About this time, a noticeable change took place in Madame Jozain. She did not seem nearly so self-satisfied, nor so agreeable to her customers. They remarked among themselves that something had certainly gone wrong, for madame was very absent-minded and rather cross, and was always talking about business being poor, and the quarter growing duller every day, while the neighbors were a set of curious gossips and busybodies.

"As soon as they find out that one has had trouble, they blacken one all they can," she said bitterly to Madame Fernandez, who was her only intimate friend.

She spoke cautiously and vaguely of her troubles, for she did not know whether the news of Raste's escapade had reached Good Children Street or not. "I dare say they have seen it in the papers," she thought angrily to herself. "Locked up for thirty days, as a suspicious character! If he had listened to me, and sold that watch at first, he would n't have got into this trouble. I told him to be careful, but he was always so headstrong, and now, I don't know what may happen any moment. The whole story may get out, through that watch being talked about in the papers, and perhaps the man that bought it was a detective. Raste did n't even find out who bought it. I shall never feel easy now until Raste is out of the way. As soon as his thirty days are ended, I shall advise him to leave New Orleans for a while. I 'm disgusted with him, to disgrace me in this way, and I don't want him here. I can hardly make enough

to support myself and that child. If it was n't for the money I 've hidden away, I should feel discouraged; but I 've got that to fall back on. I 'm thankful Raste don't know anything about it, or he 'd get it from me in some way. I 'm glad I 've got rid of all those things; I 'd be afraid to have them by me now. There 's nothing of any consequence left but that silver jewel-box, and I 'll get that off my hands the first time I go out."

Then she thought of the child. Suppose some one should recognize the child? She was becoming cowardly. A guilty conscience was an uncomfortable companion. Everything frightened her and made her suspicious. Madame Paichoux had asked some startling questions; and besides, she did not know what the child might tell. Children were so unreliable. One would think they had forgotten everything and did not see nor hear; then, suddenly, they would drop some word that would lead to wonderful revelations.

Lady Jane was an intelligent, thoughtful child, and such people as the d'Hautreves could find out many things from her. Then she congratulated herself that she had been clever enough to get her away from Mam'selle Diane, and the Paichoux, too. And that cunning little hunchback, Pepsie; and old Gex — he was a sly old villain, and no doubt her enemy, for all he was so affable and polite. Yes, she would keep the child away from them all as much as possible.

Sometimes she thought it would be best to move away from that quarter of the city; but then, her going might excite suspicion, so she waited for further developments with much anxiety.

When Raste's thirty days were up he came to his mother, very sheepish, and, apparently, very penitent. To her angry reproaches, he replied that he had done nothing; that there was no crime in his having the watch. They did n't steal the watch; they did n't ask the poor woman into their house and rob her. She came there sick, and they took care of her; and instead of turning her child into the

street, they had treated her as if she belonged to them. As for the watch, he had been keeping it only until the child was old enough to have it, or until her relatives turned up; he had never intended to sell it until he found that it was getting him into trouble, and then he was obliged to get rid of it.

Madame listened to the plausible arguments of her handsome scapegrace, and thought that perhaps, after all, there was no real cause for anxiety; and when he treated his thirty days with fine scorn, as a mere trifle, a mistake of which no one knew, she felt greatly comforted.

"Respectable people," he said, "never read about such matters, and, consequently, none of our friends will ever know of it. It won't happen again, for I mean to cut loose from the fellows who led me into that fix. I mean to go with respectable people. I shall begin all over, and earn a living in an honest way."

Madame was delighted; she never knew Raste to talk so reasonably and to be so thoughtful. After all, his punishment had n't done him any harm. He had had time to think, and these good resolves were the result of his seclusion from the *friends* who had nearly proved his ruin. Therefore, greatly relieved of her anxieties, she took the prodigal back into her heart and home, and cooked him an excellent supper, not of a fatted calf, but of a fatted pig that Madame Paichoux had sent her as a preliminary offering toward closer acquaintance.

For several days Raste remained quietly at work around the house, assisting his mother in various ways, and showing such a helpful and kindly disposition that madame was more than ever enchanted with him. She even went so far as to propose that they should form a partnership and extend their business.

"My credit is good," said madame, proudly; "I can buy a larger stock, and we might hire the store on the corner, and add a grocery department, by and by."

"But the capital? we have n't the capital," returned Raste doubtfully.

"Oh, I 'll provide the capital, or the credit, which is just as good," replied madame, with the air of a millionaire.

"Well," said Raste, "you go out among the merchants and see what you can do, and I 'll stay here and wait on the customers. There 's nothing like getting used to it, you know. But send that young one over to the 'Countess,' or to some of her swell friends. I don't want to be bothered with her everlasting questions. Did you ever see such a little monkey, sitting up holding that long-legged bird, and asking a fellow a lot of hard questions, as serious as old Father Ducros himself? By the way, I saw Father Ducros; he 's just back from Cuba. I met him yesterday, and he asked me why you did n't come to church."

Madame went out to see about the new venture with Father Ducros's name ringing in her ears, and was absent for several hours. When she returned she found the house closed and Raste gone.

In a moment Lady Jane came running with the key. Mr. Raste had brought it to her, and had told her that he was tired tending shop, and was going for a walk.

Madame smiled, and said as she took the key:

"I thought so; I thought he 'd get tired of it, but I can't expect him to keep closely to business just at first."

She took off her bonnet and veil, and put them away; then went limping about the room, putting it in order. From time to time she smiled. She had met Madame Paichoux and Marie in the Bon Marché on Rue Royale, and they had been very agreeable. Madame Paichoux had even invited her to come and dine with them, to meet Marie's fiancé. At last they were beginning to see that she was worthy of some attention, she thought.

Now, if Raste would only behave himself, they could do very well. With the ready money she had hidden away and by using

her credit she could buy a large stock of goods. She would have more shelves put up, and a counter, and a fine show-case in the window; and there was the store on the corner which Raste could

"STAGGERING TO HER BED, SHE SAT DOWN ON THE EDGE AND READ THE LARGE CHARACTERS."

fit up as a grocery. Suddenly she remembered that her rent was due, and that it was about time for her landlord's visit. She took

out her pocket book and counted its contents. She had been rather extravagant at the Bon Marché, to impress Madame Paichoux, and had spent far more than she intended. She found that she lacked a few dollars of the amount due for rent.

"I must borrow it from the private bank," she said jocosely, as she unlocked her bureau.

With the peculiar slyness of such people, she thought her hoard safer when not too securely concealed. Therefore she had folded up the whole of her year's savings, with the amount taken from Lady Jane's mother, inside of a pair of partly worn gloves, which were thrown carelessly among her other clothing in the drawer. It was true she always kept her bureau locked, and the key was hidden, and she seldom left her house alone. But even if any one should break it open, she thought they would never think of unrolling those old gloves.

When she opened the bureau it seemed very disorderly. "I did n't surely leave my things in such confusion," she said, nervously clutching at the gloves, which were startlingly conspicuous. With trembling hands and beating heart she unfolded them, but instead of the roll of notes only a slip of paper was found.

The gloves dropped from her nerveless fingers, and, staggering to her bed, she sat down on the edge and read the large characters, which were only too familiar and distinct, although they danced and wavered before her eyes:

DEAR MAMA:

I 've decided not to go into partnership with you, so I 'll take the capital and you can keep the credit. The next time that you secrete from your dutiful son money that you have no right to, don't hide it in your old gloves. It is n't safe. I 'm going away on a little trip. I need a change after my close application to business. By the way, you can tell your inquisitive neighbors that I 've gone out to my *uncle's ranch in Texas.*

Your affectionate and devoted son,

ADRASTE JOZAIN.

Chapter XXV

THE JEWEL-BOX

The next day after Raste's sudden departure, Madame Jozain sat in her doorway looking very old and worn; her face was of a settled pallor, and her eyes had a dazed, bewildered expression, as if she had received a heavy blow that had left her numb and stupid. At times she put her hand to her head and muttered, "Who would have thought it? Who would have thought it? His mother, his own mother, and I 've always been so good to him."

Suddenly she seemed to have lost her interest in her business, her customers, and even her domestic affairs. Her little store was more untidy than any one had ever seen it. When a neighbor entered to buy a trifle, or to gossip for a few moments, madame made an effort to appear cheerful and chatty, but that it was an effort was evident to all. At last some one asked if she were ill.

"Well, not exactly," she answered uneasily, "but I might as well be. The fact is I 'm fretting about that boy of mine; he took it in his head yesterday to go away to his uncle's ranch. I miss him very much. I can't get along without him, and I should n't wonder if I should go too."

When Pepsie asked what was the matter with "Tante Pauline," Lady Jane answered, as she had been instructed, that Tante Pauline had headaches, because Mr. Raste had gone away and was n't coming home for a long time.

"Madame Jozain is fretting about her son's going away," observed Madame Fernandez to her husband, looking across the

street. "She 's been sitting there all the morning so lonesome and miserable that I 'm sorry for her. But there 's some one coming to see her now. A stranger, and so well-dressed. I wonder who it can be."

The new-comer was a stranger to Madame Fernandez, but Madame Jozain welcomed her as an old friend; she sprang up with sudden animation and shook hands warmly.

"Why, Madame Hortense," she exclaimed, "what chance brings you to my little place?"

"A happy chance for you," replied Madame Hortense, laughing. "I 've come to bring you money. I 've sold the little jewel-case you left with me the other day, and sold it very well, too."

"Now, did you? How good of you, my dear! I 'm so glad — for the child's sake."

"Would you believe that I got twenty-five dollars for it? You know you said I might sell it for ten; but I got twenty-five, and I think I could have sold it for more, easily. It is solid silver and an exquisite thing."

"Yes, it was of the best workmanship," sighed madame.

"But I must tell you how I happened to sell it for such a high price. It 's very strange, and perhaps you can throw some light on the matter. One of my best customers happened to come in last evening — Mrs. Lanier, of Jackson Street. You know Lanier, the banker. They are very rich people. She was looking over the things in my show-case, when she suddenly exclaimed as if surprised:

"Why, Madame Hortense, where did you get this?" I turned around, and she had the little jewel-box in her hand, examining it closely, and I saw that she was quite pale and excited.

"Of course I told her all I knew about it; that a friend had given it to me to sell, and so on. But she interrupted me by

asking where my friend got it, and all sorts of questions; and all the while, she was looking at it as if she could n't imagine how it got there. I could only tell her that you gave it to me. Then she asked other questions, so excitedly that I could n't help showing my surprise. But I could n't give her the information she wanted, so I wrote your name and address for her, and told her to come and see you, and that you would be able to tell her all about it."

During Madame Hortense's hasty and rather confused narrative Madame Jozain turned an ashy white; and her eyes took on a hunted expression, while she followed with a set, ghastly smile every word of her friend's story.

At length she found strength and composure to say:

"Why, no wonder you were surprised. Did n't she tell you why she wanted to know?"

"I suppose she saw that I was very much puzzled, for after looking at it sadly for some time, she said that it was a mystery how it came there; that she had given that little casket to a schoolmate ten years before, while at school in New York; that she had had it made especially for her, and that her friend's initials, J. C., were on it."

"Dear, dear, only think! Some old schoolmate, I suppose," said Madame Jozain hastily.

"Then she asked me if I would sell her the little box; and I said certainly I would, that it was put there to sell. Seeing how anxious she was to get it, I thought I would put the price at twenty-five dollars, although I did n't much think she 'd give it. But she never said a word about the price; she paid it in a dazed way, took your address that I 'd written for her, and went out, carrying the little casket with her. I suppose she 'll be here to-day or to-morrow to see you; and so I thought I 'd hurry down and tell you all about it."

"And your commission?" said Madame Jozain, with a visible effort, as the milliner laid the money on the table.

"Oh, *par exemple*, Madame Jozain! As if I would! No, no; we 're too old friends. I cannot take pay for doing you a little favor. And besides, I 'm glad to do it for the dear child. She must be a great anxiety to you."

"She is!" returned madame, with a heavy sigh, "but she has some property in Texas, I believe. My son has just gone there, and I 'm thinking of going too. I 'm very lonely here."

"Ah!" said Madame Hortense, surprised. "Why, you are so well placed here. Shall you go soon?"

"Before very long," replied madame, who did not care to be more definite.

"Well, come and see me before you go."

Madame Hortense drew down her veil, and rose to leave. "I 'm sorry I can't stay longer to chat with you; I 'm busy, very busy. Now, mind, be sure to come and say good-by," and with a cordial *au revoir* the little milliner hurried down the steps and out of sight around the corner.

For some time after her visitor had gone, Madame Jozain stood quite still in the middle of her little shop, with her hands pressed to her head and her eyes fixed on vacancy. At length she muttered to herself: "She 'll come here; yes, she 'll come here! I can't see her; I can't tell her where I got that box. I must get away at once. I must go out and find another place. There 'll be no more peace on earth for me! My punishment 's begun!"

Then madame hurriedly put on her best gown and bonnet, and calling across to Lady Jane, who was with Pepsie, she said she was going out on business, and that she might not be back for some time.

Chapter XXVI

THE FLIGHT

Late that same afternoon, Madame Jozain was limping slowly and wearily through a narrow street at the other end of the city, miles away from Good Children Street, when she saw an old negro sitting on a furniture-wagon to which two mules were harnessed.

"Is that you, Pete?" she asked, stopping and looking at him.

"Why, law, yes, it 's me, Miss Pauline, an' I is mighty glad ter see yer," said the old man, climbing down.

"And I 'm glad to find you, Pete. I see you 've got a wagon. Is it yours?"

"Well, 't ain't edzectly mine, Miss Pauline. I is hired it. But I is a-drivin' it."

"I was just looking for some one to move me to-night, Pete."

"Ter-night, Miss Pauline? Why, we does n't often work a'ter sundown, an' it 's mos' dat now."

"What do you charge for a load, Pete, when you move furniture?"

"I mos' gen'ly charges two dollars a load — when it ain't too fur, Miss Pauline," he answered slowly.

"Well it *is* far, Pete; it is from Good Children Street."

"Oh, Miss Pauline, I can't do dat dar ter-night. My mules is too tired for dat."

Madame stood still and thought for a moment.

"See here, Pete," she said at length in a tone of decision; "I want you to remember that you belonged to our family once, and

MADAME JOZAIN BARGAINS FOR HER MOVING.

I want you to listen to me, and do what I tell you. You 're to ask no questions, nor answer none; mind that! You 're to keep your tongue still. Take your mules out now, and give them a good feed, and let them rest awhile. Then be at my house by ten this evening. That will be soon enough, for I 've got to pack. If you 'll move me quietly, and without any fuss, I 'll give you ten dollars for the load."

"Ten dollars, Miss Pauline?" and the old darky grinned. "Bress yer, miss, I is a mind ter try it — but it 's a mighty long road!"

"You 've got plenty of time; you need n't hurry. Bring a man to help, and leave your wagon in the side street. I want the things taken out the back way, and no noise. Mind what I say, *no noise*."

"All right, Miss Pauline, I 'll be dar *shore*. An' yer 'll gib me ten dollars?"

"Yes, ten dollars," replied madame, as she limped away to take the street-car.

Some of Madame Jozain's neighbors remembered afterward that they slept badly that night — had uneasy dreams and heard mysterious noises; but as there was a thunder-storm about daybreak, they had concluded that it was the electricity in the air which caused their restlessness. However, Pepsie afterward insisted that she had heard Lady Jane cry out, and call "Pepsie!" as if in great distress or fear, and that about the same time there were sounds of hushed voices, rumbling of wheels, and other mysterious noises. But her mother had told her she was dreaming.

So upset was Pepsie by the night's experience that she looked quite pale and ill as she sat by her window next morning, waiting for Madame Jozain to open the shutters and doors.

How strange! It was eight o'clock, and still no sign of life in the house opposite! The milkman had rung his bell in vain; the brick-dust vender had set his bucket of powdered brick on the very steps, and shrieked his discordant notes close to the door; the

clothes-pole man had sung his dismal song, and the snap-bean woman had chanted her three syllables, not unmusically, and yet no one appeared to open the door of Madame Jozain's house.

At last Pepsie could endure her suspense no longer.

"You go and see what is the matter," she said to her little handmaid.

So Tite zigzagged across the street, flew up the steps, and pounded vigorously on the door; then she tried the shutters and the gate, and finally even climbed the fence, and peeped in at the back windows. In a trice she was back, gasping and wild-eyed:

"Bress yer, Miss Peps'. W'at I done tol' yer? Dem's all gone. Ain't a stick or nofin' in dat dar house! Jes' ez empty ez a gourd!"

At first Pepsie would not believe the dreadful news; but finally, when she was convinced that madame had fled in the night and taken Lady Jane with her, she sank into the very depths of woe and refused to be comforted.

Then Paichoux and Tante Modeste were called into a family council, and Paichoux did his very best to solve the mystery. But all he could learn was from madame's landlord, who said that Madame Jozain had paid her rent and given up her key, saying that she had decided, very suddenly, to follow her son. This was all the information the landlord could give, and Paichoux returned dejectedly with this meager result.

"I had my plans," he said, "and I was waiting for the right moment to put them in operation. Now, the child has disappeared, and I can do nothing."

The next day Pepsie, sitting sorrowfully at her window, trying to find consolation in a game of solitaire, saw a private carriage drive up to the empty house and wait, while the servant made inquiries for Madame Jozain.

"Madame Jozain *did* live there," said M. Fernandez politely, "but she went away between two days, and we know nothing at all about her. There was something strange about it, or she never would have left without telling her friends good-by, and leaving some future address."

The servant imparted this scanty information to the lady in the carriage, who drove away looking greatly disappointed.

The arrival of this elegant visitor directly following upon madame's flight furnished a subject for romantic conjecture.

"I should n't wonder," said Pepsie, "if that was Lady's mama, who has come back after all! Oh, how dreadful that she was n't here to see her!" and then poor Pepsie cried, and would not be consoled.

Chapter XXVII

THE LITTLE STREET SINGER

It was Christmas Eve, and very nearly dark, when Mrs. Lanier, driving up St. Charles Avenue in her comfortable carriage quite filled with costly presents for her children, noticed a forlorn little figure, standing alone at a street corner. There was something about the sorrowful looking little creature that moved her strangely, for she turned and watched it as long as she could discern the child's face in the gathering twilight.

It was a little girl, thinly clad in a soiled and torn white frock; her black stockings were full of holes, and her shoes so worn that the tiny white toes were visible through the rents. She hugged a thin, faded shawl around her shoulders, and her yellow hair fell in matted, tangled strands below her waist; her small face was pale and pinched, and had a woe-begone look that would melt the hardest heart. Although she was soiled and ragged, she did not look like a common child, and it was that indefinable something in her appearance that attracted Mrs. Lanier's attention, for she thought, as the carriage whirled by and left the child far behind, "Poor little thing! she did n't look like a street beggar. I wish I had stopped and spoken to her!"

It was Lady Jane, and her descent in the scale of misery had been rapid indeed.

Since that night, some four months before, when Madame Jozain had awakened her rudely and told her she must come away, she had lived in a sort of wretched stupor. It was true she had

resisted at first, and had cried desperately for Pepsie, for Mam'selle Diane, for Gex — but all in vain ; Madame had scolded and threatened and frightened her into submission.

That terrible midnight ride in the wagon, with the piled-up furniture, the two black drivers, who seemed to the child's distorted imagination two frightful demons, madame angry, and at times violent if she complained or cried, and the frightful threats and cruel hints of a more dreadful fate, had so crushed and appalled the child that she scarcely dared open her pale little lips either to protest or plead.

Then the pitiful change in her life, from loving care and pleasant companionship to utter squalid misery and neglect. She had been suddenly taken from comparative comfort and plunged into the most cruel poverty. Good Children Street had been a paradise compared to the narrow, dirty lane, on the outskirts of the city, where madame had hidden herself; for the wretched woman, in her fear and humiliation, seemed to have lost every vestige of ambition, and to have sunk without the least effort to save herself, to a level with those around her.

Madame had taken a terrible cold in her hurried flight, and it had settled in her lame hip; therefore she was obliged to lie in her bed most of the time, and the little money she had was soon spent. Hunger was staring her in the face, and the cold autumn winds chilled her to the marrow. She had been poor and in many bitter straits, but never before like this. Now she dared not let any one know of her whereabouts, and for that reason the few friends that she still had could not help her. She was ill and suffering, and alone in her misery. Her son had robbed and deserted her, and left her to her punishment, and, for all she knew, she must die of starvation. Through the aid of the negro Pete, she had parted with nearly everything of value that she had, and, to crown her cruelty and

Lady Jane's misery, one day when the child was absent on a begging expedition she sold the blue heron to an Italian for two dollars.

The bird was the only comfort the unhappy little creature had, the only link between the past and the miserable present, and when she returned to her squalid home and found her only treasure gone, her grief was so wild and uncontrollable that madame feared for her life. Therefore, in order to quiet the child, she said the bird had broken his string and strayed away.

After this, the child spent her days wandering about searching for Tony.

When madame first sent her out into the street to sing and beg, she went without a protest, so perfect was her habit of obedience, and so great her anxiety to please and conciliate her cruel tyrant. For, since the night when madame fled from Good Children Street, she had thrown off all pretenses of affection for the hapless little one, whom she considered the cause of all her misfortunes.

"She has made trouble enough for me," she would say bitterly, in her hours of silent communion with her own conscience. "If it had n't been for her mother coming to me, Raste would n't have had that watch and would n't have got locked up for thirty days. After that disgrace, he could n't stay here, and that was the cause of his taking my money and running off. Yes, all my trouble has come through her in one way or another, and now she must sing and beg, or she 'll have to starve."

Before madame sent her out, she gave Lady Jane instructions in the most imperative manner. "She must never on any account speak of Good Children Street, of Madelon or Pepsie, of the d'Hautreves, of Gex, or the Paichoux, or of any one she had ever known there. She must not talk with people, and, above all, she must never tell her name, nor where she lived. She must only sing and

hold out her hand. Sometimes she might cry if she wanted to, but she must *never* laugh."

These instructions the child followed to the letter, with the exception of one. She never cried, for although her little heart was breaking she was too proud to shed tears.

It was astonishing how many nickels she picked up. Sometimes she would come home with her little pocket quite heavy, for her wonderful voice, so sweet and so pathetic, as well as her sad face and wistful eyes, touched many a heart, even among the coarsest and rudest, and madame might have reaped quite a harvest if she had not been so avaricious as to sell Tony for two dollars. When she did that she killed her goose that laid golden eggs, for after the loss of her pet the child could not sing; her little heart was too heavy, and the unshed tears choked her and drowned her voice in quivering sobs.

The moment she was out of Tante Pauline's sight, instead of gathering nickels, she was wandering around aimlessly, searching and asking for the blue heron, and at night, when she returned with an empty pocket, she shivered and cowered into a corner for fear of madame's anger.

One morning it was very cold; she had had no breakfast, and she felt tired and ill, and when madame told her to go out and not to come back without some money, she fell to crying piteously, and for the first time begged and implored to stay where she was, declaring that she could not sing any more, and that she was afraid, because some rude children had thrown mud at her the day before, and told her not to come into the street again.

This first revolt seemed to infuriate madame, for reaching out to where the child stood trembling and sobbing she clutched her and shook her violently, and then slapping her tear-stained little face until it tingled, she bade her go out instantly, and not to return unless she brought some money with her.

This was the first time that Lady Jane had suffered the ignominy of a blow, and it seemed to arouse her pride and indignation, for she stopped sobbing instantly, and, wiping the tears resolutely from her face, shot one glance of mingled scorn and surprise at her tyrant, and walked out of the room with the dignity of a little princess.

When once outside, she held her hands for a moment to her burning face, while she tried to still the tumult of anger and sorrow that was raging in her little heart; then she gathered herself together with a courage beyond her years, and hurried away without once looking back at the scene of her torture.

When she was far enough from the wretched neighborhood to feel safe from observation, she turned in a direction quite different from any she had taken before. The wind was intensely cold, but the sun shone brightly, and she hugged her little shawl around her, and ran on and on swiftly and hopefully.

"If I hurry and walk and walk just as fast as I can, I 'm sure to come to Good Children Street, and then I 'll ask Pepsie or Mam'selle Diane to keep me, for I 'll never, *never*, go back to Tante Pauline again."

By and by, when she was quite tired with running and walking, she came to a beautiful, broad avenue that she had never seen before. There were large, fine houses, and gardens blooming brightly even in the chilly December wind, and lovely children, dressed in warm velvet and furs, walking with their nurses on the wide, clean sidewalks; and every moment carriages drawn by glossy, prancing horses whirled by, and people laughed and talked merrily, and looked so happy and contented. She had never seen anything like it before. It was all delightful, like a pleasant dream, and even better than Good Children Street. She thought of Pepsie, and wished that she could see it, and then she imagined how enchanted her friend

would be to ride in one of those fine carriages, with the sun shining on her, and the fresh wind blowing in her face. The wind reminded her that she was cold. It pierced through her thin frock and scanty skirts, and the holes in her shoes and stockings made her ashamed. After a while she found a sunny corner on the steps of a church, where she crouched and tried to cover her dilapidated shoes with her short skirts.

Presently a merry group of children passed, and she heard them talking of Christmas. "To-morrow is Christmas; this is Christmas Eve, and we are going to have a Christmas-tree." Her heart gave a great throb of joy. By to-morrow she was sure to find Pepsie, and Pepsie had promised her a Christmas-tree long ago, and she would n't forget; she was sure to have it ready for her. Oh, if she only dared ask some of these kind-looking people to show her the way to Good Children Street! But she remembered what Tante Pauline had told her, and fear kept her silent. However, she was sure, now that she had got away from that dreadful place, that some one would find her. Mr. Gex had found her before when she was lost, and he might find her now, because she did n't have a domino on, and he would know her right away; and then she would get Mr. Gex to hunt for Tony, and perhaps she would have Tony for Christmas. In this way she comforted herself until she was quite happy.

After a while a kind-looking woman came along with a market-basket on her arm. She was eating something, and Lady Jane, being very hungry, looked at her so wistfully that the woman stopped and asked her if she would like a piece of bread. She replied eagerly that she would. The good woman gave her a roll and a large, rosy apple, and she went back to her corner and munched them contentedly. Then a fine milk-cart rattled up to a neighboring door, and her heart almost leaped to her throat; but it was not

Tante Modeste. Still, Tante Modeste might come any moment. She sold milk way up town to rich people. Yes, she was sure to come; so she sat in her corner and ate her apple, and waited with unwavering confidence.

And in this way the day passed pleasantly and comfortably to Lady Jane. She was not very cold in her sheltered corner, and the good woman's kindness had satisfied her hunger; but at last she began to think that it must be nearly night, for she saw the sun slipping down into the cold, gray clouds behind the opposite houses, and she wondered what she should do and where she should go when it was quite dark. Neither Tante Modeste nor Mr. Gex had come, and now it was too late and she would have to wait until to-morrow. Then she began to reproach herself for sitting still. "I should have gone on and on, and by this time I would have been in Good Children Street," said she.

She never thought of returning to her old haunts or to Tante Pauline, and if she had tried she could not have found her way back. She had wandered too far from her old landmarks, so the only thing to do was to press on in her search for Good Children Street. It was while she was standing at a corner, uncertain which way to turn, that Mrs. Lanier caught a glimpse of her. And what good fortune it would have been to Lady Jane if that noble-hearted woman had obeyed the kindly impulse that urged her to stop and speak to the friendless little waif! But destiny intended it to be otherwise, so she went on her way to her luxurious home and happy children, while the desolate orphan wandered about in the cold and darkness, looking in vain for the humble friends who even at that moment were thinking of her and longing for her.

Poor little soul! she had never been out in the dark night alone before, and every sound and movement startled her. Once a dog sprang out and barked at her, and she ran trembling into a doorway,

only to be ordered away by an unkind servant. Sometimes she stopped and looked into the windows of the beautiful houses as she passed. There were bright fires, lights, pictures, and flowers, and she heard the merry voices of children laughing and playing; and the soft notes of a piano, with some one singing, reminded her of Mam'selle Diane. Then a choking sob would rise in her throat, and she would cover her face and cry a little silently.

"A RIGHT MERRY TIME SHE HAD OUT THERE IN THE BITING DECEMBER NIGHT, PIROUETTING WITH HER OWN SHADOW."

Presently she found herself before a large, handsome house; the blinds were open and the parlor was brilliantly lighted. A lady — it was Mrs. Lanier — sat at the piano playing a waltz, and two little girls in white frocks and red sashes were dancing together. Lady Jane pressed near the railing, and devoured the scene with wide, sparkling eyes. They were the same steps that Gex had taught her, and it was the very waltz that he sometimes whistled. Before she knew it, quite carried away by the music, and forgetful of everything, she dropped her shawl, and holding out her soiled ragged skirt, was tripping and whirling as merrily as the little ones

within, while opposite to her, her shadow, thrown by a street lamp over her head, tripped and bobbed and whirled, not unlike Mr. Gex, the ancient "professeur of the dance." And a right merry time she had out there in the biting December night, pirouetting with her own shadow.

Suddenly the music stopped, a nurse came and took the little girls away, and some one drew down the blinds and shut her out alone in the cold; there was nothing then for her to do but to move on, and picking up her shawl, she crept away a little wearily, for dancing, although it had lightened her heart, had wasted her strength, and it seemed to her that the wind was rising and the cold becoming more intense, for she shivered from time to time, and her bare little toes and fingers smarted badly. Once or twice, from sheer exhaustion, she dropped down on a door-step, but when she saw any one approaching she sprang up and hurried along, trying to be brave and patient. Yes, she must come to Good Children Street very soon, and she never turned a corner that she did not expect to see Madelon's little house, wedged in between the two tall ones, and the light gleaming from Pepsie's small window.

Chapter XXVIII

LADY JANE FINDS SHELTER

At last, when she began to feel very tired and sleepy, she came to a place where two streets seemed to run together in a long point, and before her she saw a large building, with lights in all the windows, and behind it a tall church spire seemed nearly to touch the stars that hung above it so soft and bright. Her tearful eyes singled out two of them very near together that looked as though they were watching her, and she held out her arms, and murmured, "Papa, mama, can't I come to you? I'm so cold and sleepy." Poor little soul! the stars made no answer to her piteous appeal, but continued to twinkle as serenely as they have done since time began, and will do until it ends. Then she looked again toward the brilliantly lighted windows under the shadow of the church spire. She could not get very near, for in front of the house was an iron railing, but she noticed a marble slab let into the wall over the porch, on which was an inscription, and above it a row of letters were visible in the light from the street lamps. Lady Jane spelled them out. "'O r p h a n s' H o m e.' Or-phans! I wonder what orphans are? Oh, how warm and light it is in there!" Then she put her little cold toes between the iron railings on the stone coping, and clinging with her two hands lifted herself a little higher, and there she saw an enchanting sight. In the center of the room was a tree, a real tree, growing nearly to the ceiling, with moss and flowers on the ground around it, and never did the spreading branches of any other tree bear such glorious fruit. There was a great deal of light and color; and moving, swaying balls of silver

and gold danced and whirled before her dazzled eyes. At first she could hardly distinguish the different objects in the confusion of form and color; but at last she saw that there was everything the most exacting child could desire — birds, rabbits, dogs, kittens, dolls; globes of gold, silver, scarlet, and blue; tops, pictures, games, bonbons, sugared fruits, apples, oranges, and little frosted cakes, in such bewildering profusion that they were like the patterns in a kaleidoscope. And there was a merry group of girls, laughing and talking, while they hung, and pinned, and fastened, more and more, until it seemed as if the branches would break under their load.

"LADY JANE, CLINGING TO THE RAILING, LOOKED AND LOOKED."

And Lady Jane, clinging to the railing, with stiff, cold hands and aching feet, pressed her little, white face close to the iron bars, and looked and looked.

Suddenly the door was opened, and a woman came out, who, when she saw the child clinging to the railing, bareheaded and

scantily clothed in spite of the piercing cold, went to her and spoke kindly and gently.

Her voice brought Lady Jane back from Paradise to the bitter reality of her position and the dreary December night. For a moment she could hardly move, and she was so chilled and cramped that when she unclasped her hold she almost fell into the motherly arms extended toward her.

"My child, my poor child, what are you doing here so late, in the cold, and with these thin clothes? Why don't you go home?"

Then the poor little soul, overcome with a horrible fear, began to shiver and cry. "Oh, don't! Oh, please don't send me back to Tante Pauline! I 'm afraid of her; she shook me and struck me this morning, and I 've run away from her."

"Where does your Tante Pauline live?" asked the woman, studying the tremulous little face with a pair of keen, thoughtful eyes.

"I don't know; away over there somewhere."

"Don't you know the name of the street?"

"It is n't a street; it 's a little place all mud and water, with boards to walk on."

"Can't you tell me your aunt's name?"

"Yes, it 's Tante Pauline."

"But her other name?"

"I don't know, I only know Tante Pauline. Oh please, *please* don't send me there! I 'm afraid to go back, because she said I must sing and beg money, and I could n't sing, and I did n't like to ask people for nickels," and the child's voice broke into a little wail of entreaty that touched the kind heart of that noble, tender, loving woman, the Margaret whom some to-day call Saint Margaret. She had heard just such pitiful stories before from hundreds of hapless little orphans, who never appealed to her in vain.

"Where are your father and mother?" she asked, as she led the child to the shelter of the porch.

Lady Jane made the same pathetic answer as usual:

"Papa went to heaven, and Tante Pauline says that mama's gone away, and I think she 's gone where papa is."

Margaret's eyes filled with tears, while the child shivered and clung closer to her. "Would you like to stay here to-night, my dear?" she asked, as she opened the door. "This is the home of a great many little homeless girls, and the good Sisters love and care for them all."

Lady Jane's anxious face brightened instantly. "Oh, can I — can I stay here where the Christmas-tree is?"

"Yes, my child, and to-morrow there will be something on it for you."

And Margaret opened the door and led Lady Jane into that safe and comfortable haven where so many hapless little ones have found a shelter.

That night, after the child had been fed and warmed, and was safely in bed with the other little orphans, the good Margaret sent word to all the police stations that she had housed a little wanderer who if called for could be found safe in her care.

But the little wanderer was not claimed the next day, nor the next week. Time went on, and Lady Jane was considered a permanent inmate of the home. She wore the plain uniform of blue, and her long golden hair was plaited in a thick braid, but still she was lovely, although not as picturesque as when Pepsie brushed her waving locks. She was so lovely in person and so gentle and obedient that she soon became the idol, not only of the good Margaret, but of all the Sisters, and even of the children, and her singing was a constant pleasure, for every day her voice became stronger and richer, and her thrilling little strains went straight to the hearts of those who heard them.

"She must be taught music," said Margaret to Sister Agnes; "such a voice must be carefully cultivated for the church." Therefore the Sister who took her in charge devoted herself to the development of the child's wonderful talent, and in a few months she was spoken of as quite a musical prodigy, and all the wealthy patronesses of the home singled her out as one that was rare and beautiful, and showered all sorts of gifts and attentions upon her. Among those who treated her with marked favor was Mrs. Lanier. She never visited the home without asking for little Jane (Margaret had thought it best to drop the "Lady," and the child, with an intuition of what was right, complied with the wish), and never went away without leaving some substantial evidence of her interest in the child.

"I believe Mrs. Lanier would like to adopt little Jane," said Margaret one day to Sister Agnes, when that lady had just left. "If she had n't so many children of her own, I don't think she would leave her long with us."

"It *is* surprising, the interest she takes in her," returned Sister Agnes. "When the child sings she just sits as if she was lost to everything, and listens with all her soul."

"And she asks the strangest questions about the little thing," continued Margaret reflectively. "And she is always suggesting some way to find out who the child belonged to; but although I 've tried every way I can think of, I have never been able to learn anything satisfactory."

It was true Margaret had made every effort from the very first to discover something of the child's antecedents; but she had been unsuccessful, owing in a measure to Lady Jane's reticence. She had tried by every means to draw some remarks from her that would furnish a clue to work upon; but all that she could ever induce the child to say was to repeat the simple statement she had made the first night, when the good woman found her, cold and forlorn, clinging to the iron railing in front of the Home.

But Lady Jane's reticence was not from choice. It was fear that kept her silent about her life in Good Children Street. Often she would be about to mention Pepsie, Mam'selle Diane, or the Paichoux, but the fear of Tante Pauline would freeze the words on her lips. And she was so happy where she was that even her sorrow for the loss of Tony was beginning to die out. She loved the good Sisters, and her grateful little heart clung to Margaret who had saved her from being sent back to Tante Pauline and the dreadful fate of a little street beggar. And the warm-hearted little orphans were like sisters to her; they were merry little playmates, and she was a little queen among them. And there was the church, with the beautiful altar, the pictures, the lights, and the music. Oh, how heavenly the music was, and how she loved to sing with the Sisters! and the grand organ notes carried her little soul up to the celestial gates on strains of sweet melody. Yes, she loved it all and was very happy, but she never ceased to think of Pepsie, Madelon, and Gex, and when she sang, she seemed always to be with Mam'selle Diane, nestled close to her side, and, mingled with the strong, rich voices of the Sisters, she fancied she heard the sweet, faded strains of her beloved teacher and friend.

Sometimes when she was studying her lessons she would forget for a moment where she was, and her book would fall in her lap, and again she would be sitting with Pepsie, shelling pecans or watching with breathless interest a game of solitaire; and at times when she was playing with the children suddenly she would remember the ancient "professeur of the dance," and she would hold out her little blue skirt, and trip and whirl as gracefully in her coarse shoes as she did when Gex was her teacher.

And so the months went on with Lady Jane, while her friends in Good Children Street never ceased to talk of her and to lament over their loss. Poor Mam'selle Diane was in great trouble. Ma-

dame d'Hautreve was very ill, and there was little hope of her recovery. "She may linger through the spring," the doctor said, "but you can hardly expect to keep her through the summer." And he was right, for during the last days of the dry, hot month of August, the poor lady, one of the last of an old aristocracy, closed her dim eyes on a life that had been full of strange vicissitudes, and was laid away in the ancient tomb of the d'Hautreves, not far from Lady Jane's young mother. And Mam'selle Diane, the noble, patient, self-sacrificing daughter, was left alone in the little house, with her memories, her flowers, and her birds. And often, during those first bitter days of bereavement, she would say to herself, "Oh, if I had that sweet child now, what a comfort she would be to me! To hear her heavenly little voice would give me new hope and courage."

On the morning of Madame d'Hautreve's funeral, when Paichoux opened his paper at the breakfast table, he uttered such a loud exclamation of surprise that Tante Modeste almost dropped the coffee-pot.

"What is it, papa, what is it?" she cried.

And in reply Paichoux read aloud the notice of the death of Madame *la veuve* d'Hautreve, *née* d'Orgenois; and directly underneath: "Died at the Charity Hospital, Madame Pauline Jozain, *née* Bergeron."

Chapter XXIX

TANTE MODESTE FINDS LADY JANE

When Paichoux read of the death of Madame Jozain in the Charity Hospital, he said decidedly: "Modeste, that woman never left the city. She never went to Texas. She has been hidden here all the time, and I must find that child."

"And if you find her, papa, bring her right here to me," said the kind-hearted woman. "We have a good many children, it 's true; but there 's always room for Lady Jane, and I love the little thing as well as if she were mine."

Paichoux was gone nearly all day, and, much to the disappointment of the whole family, did not find Lady Jane.

His first visit had been to the Charity Hospital, where he learned that Madame Jozain had been brought there a few days before by the charity wagon. It had been called to a miserable little cabin back of the city, where they had found the woman very ill, with no one to care for her, and destitute of every necessity. There was no child with her—she was quite alone; and in the few lucid intervals that preceded her death she had never spoken of any child. Paichoux then obtained the directions from the driver of the charity wagon, and after some search he found the wretched neighborhood. There all they could tell him was that the woman had come a few weeks before; that she had brought very little with her, and appeared to be suffering. There was no child with her then, and none of the neighbors had ever seen one visit her, or, for that matter, a grown person either. When she became worse they were

afraid she might die alone, and had called the charity wagon to take her to the hospital. The Public Administrator had taken charge of what little she left, and that was all they could tell.

Did any one know where she lived before she came there? No one knew; an old negro had brought her and her few things, and they had not noticed the number of his wagon. The landlord of the squalid place said that the same old man who brought her had engaged her room; he did not know the negro. Madame had paid a month's rent in advance, and just when the month was up she had been carried to the hospital.

There the information stopped, and, in spite of every effort, Paichoux could learn no more. The wretched woman had indeed obliterated, as it were, every trace of the child. In her fear of detection, after Lady Jane's escape from her, she had moved from place to place, hunted and pursued by a guilty conscience that would never allow her to rest, and gradually going from bad to worse until she had died in that last refuge for the miserable, the Charity Hospital.

"And here I am, just where I started!" said Paichoux dejectedly, after he had told Tante Modeste of his day's adventure. "However," said he, "I sha'n't give it up. I 'm bound to find out what she did with that child; the more I think of it, the more I 'm convinced that she never went to Texas, and that the child is still here. Now I 've a mind to visit every orphan asylum in the city, and see if I can't find her in one of them."

"I 'll go with you," said Tante Modeste. "We 'll see for ourselves, and then we shall be satisfied. Unless she gave Lady Jane away, she 's likely to be in some such place; and I think, as I always have, Paichoux, that she stole Lady Jane from some rich family, and that was why she ran off so suddenly and hid. That lady's coming the day after proves that some one was on madame's track. Oh, I tell

you there 's a history there, if we can only get at it! We 'll start out to-morrow and see what can be done. I sha'n't rest until the child is found and restored to her own people."

One morning, while Lady Jane was in the school-room busy with her lessons, Margaret entered with some visitors. It was a

"PAICHOUX LOOKED ON, SMILING BROADLY."

very common thing for people to come during study hours, and the child did not look up until she heard some one say: "These are the children of that age. See if you recognize 'Lady Jane' among them."

It was her old name that startled her, and made her turn suddenly toward the man and woman, who were looking eagerly

about the room. In an instant the bright-faced woman cried, "Yes! yes! Oh, there she is!" and simultaneously Lady Jane exclaimed, "Tante Modeste, oh, Tante Modeste!" and, quicker than I can tell it, she was clasped to the loving heart of her old friend, while Paichoux looked on, twirling his hat and smiling broadly.

"Jane, you can come with us," said Margaret, as she led the way to the parlor.

There was a long and interesting conversation, to which the child listened with grave wonder, while she nestled close to Tante Modeste. She did not understand all they said, there was a great deal about Madame Jozain and Good Children Street, and a gold watch with diamond initials, and beautiful linen with initial letters, J. C., embroidered on it, and madame's sudden flight, and the visit of the elegant lady in the fine carriage, the Texas story, and madame's wretched hiding-place and miserable death in the Charity Hospital; to all of which Margaret listened with surprise and interest. Then she in turn told the Paichoux how Lady Jane had been found looking in the window on Christmas Eve, while she clung to the railings, half-clad and suffering with the cold, and how she had questioned her and endeavored to get some clue to her identity.

"Why did n't you tell Mother Margaret about your friends in Good Children Street, my dear?" asked Tante Modeste, with one of her bright smiles.

Lady Jane hesitated a moment, and then replied timidly, "Because I was afraid."

"What were you afraid of, my child?" asked Paichoux kindly.

"Tante Pauline told me that I must n't." Then she stopped and looked wistfully at Margaret. "Must I tell now, Mother Margaret? Will it be right to tell? Tante Pauline told me not to."

"Yes, my dear, you can tell everything now. It 's right. You must tell us all you remember."

"Tante Pauline told me that I must never, never speak of Good Children Street nor of any one that lived there, and that I must never tell any one my name, nor where I lived."

"Poor child!" said Margaret to Paichoux. "There must have been some serious reason for so much secrecy. Yes, I agree with you that there 's a mystery which we must try to clear up, but I would rather wait a little while. Jane has a friend who is very rich and very influential — Mrs. Lanier, the banker's wife. She is absent in Washington, and when she returns I 'll consult with her, and we 'll see what 's best to be done. I should n't like to take any important step until then. But in the mean time, Mr. Paichoux, it will do no harm to put your plan in operation. I think the idea is good, and in this way we can work together."

Then Paichoux promised to begin his investigations at once, for he was certain that they would bring about some good results, and that, before many months had passed, Mother Margaret would have one orphan less to care for.

While Margaret and Paichoux were discussing these important matters, Tante Modeste and Lady Jane were talking as fast as their tongues could fly. The child heard for the first time about poor Mam'selle Diane's loss, and her eyes filled with tears of sympathy for her gentle friend. And then, there were Pepsie and Madelon, Gex and Tite — did they remember her and want to see her? Oh, how glad she was to hear from them all again; and Tante Modeste cried a little when Lady Jane told her of that terrible midnight ride, of the wretched home she had been carried to, of her singing and begging in the streets, of her cold and hunger, and of the blow she had received as the crowning cruelty.

"But the worst of all was losing Tony. Oh, Tante Modeste!" and the tears sprang to her eyes, "I 'm afraid I 'll never, never find him!"

"Yes, you will, my dear. I 've faith to believe you will," replied Tante Modeste hopefully. "We 've found you, *ma petite*, and now we 'll find the bird. Don't fret about it."

Then after Margaret had promised to take Lady Jane to Good Children Street the next day, the good couple went away well pleased with what they had accomplished.

Tante Modeste could not return home until she had told Pepsie as well as little Gex the good news. And Mam'selle Diane's sad heart was greatly cheered to know that the dear child was safe in the care of the good Margaret. And oh, what bright hopes and plans filled the lonely hours of that evening, as she sat dreaming on her little gallery in the pale, cold moonlight!

The next day Pepsie cried and laughed together when Lady Jane sprang into her arms and embraced her with the old fervor. "You 're just the same," she said, holding the child off and looking at her fondly; "that is, your face has n't changed; but I don't like your hair braided, and I don't like your clothes. I must get Mother Margaret to let me dress you as I used to."

And Mam'selle Diane had something of the same feeling when, after the first long embrace, she looked at the child and asked Mother Margaret if it was necessary for her to wear the uniform of the home.

"She must wear it while she is an inmate," replied Margaret, smiling. "But that will not be long, I suspect. We shall lose her—yes, I 'm afraid we shall lose her soon."

Then Mam'selle Diane talked a long while with Margaret about her hopes and plans for Lady Jane. "I am all alone," she said pathetically, "and she would give me a new interest in life. If her relatives are not discovered, why cannot I have her? I will educate her, and teach her music, and devote my life to her."

Margaret promised to think it over, and in the mean time she

consented that Lady Jane should remain a few days with Mam'selle Diane and her friends in Good Children Street.

That night, while the child was nestled close to Mam'selle Diane as they sat together on the little moonlit gallery, she suddenly asked with startling earnestness:

"Has your mama gone to heaven too, Mam'selle Diane?"

"I hope so, my darling; I think so," replied Diane in a choked voice.

"Well, then, if she has, she 'll see my papa and mama, and tell them about me, and oh, Mam'selle, won't they be glad to hear from me?"

"I hope she will tell them how dearly I love you, and what you are to me," murmured Mam'selle, pressing her cheeks to the bright little head resting against her shoulder.

"Look up there, Mam'selle Diane, do you see those two beautiful stars so near together? I always think they are mama and papa, watching me. Now I know mama is there too, and will never come back again; and see, near those there is another very soft and bright, perhaps that is *your* mama shining there with them."

"Perhaps it is, my dear—yes, perhaps it is," and Mam'selle Diane raised her faded eyes toward the sky, with new hope and strength in their calm depths.

About that time Paichoux began a most laborious correspondence with a fashionable jeweler in New York, which resulted in some very valuable information concerning a watch with a diamond monogram.

Chapter XXX

At Mrs. Lanier's

It was a few days before the following Christmas, and Mrs. Lanier, who had just returned from Washington, was sitting alone one evening in her own pretty little parlor, when a servant handed her a card.

"Arthur Maynard," she read. "Let him come up at once"; and as the servant left the room she added to herself: "Dear boy! I 'm so glad he 's come for Christmas."

In a moment a handsome young fellow was in the room, shaking hands in the most cordial way.

"You see I 'm home, as usual, for the holidays, Mrs. Lanier," he said, showing a row of very white teeth when he laughed.

"Yes, you always do come for Christmas and Mardi-gras, don't you? You 're such a boy still, Arthur," and Mrs. Lanier looked at him as if she approved of his boyishness. "Sit down and let us have a long chat. The children have gone to the theater with Mr. Lanier. I was too tired to go with them. You know we reached home only this morning."

"No. I did n't know that or I would n't have come. You don't want to be bothered with me when you 're so tired," said Arthur, rising.

"Nonsense, Arthur; sit down. You always cheer me up. You 're so full of life and spirits, I 'm really glad to see you."

While Mrs. Lanier was speaking, the young fellow's bright, clear eyes were traveling about the room, and glancing at everything,

pictures, *bric-à-brac*, and flowers. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation, and, springing up, seized a photograph in a velvet frame that stood on a cabinet near him.

It represented a family group, father, mother, and child; and for a moment he seemed too surprised to speak. Then he asked, in a very excited tone, "Mrs. Lanier, where did you get this — and who is the lady?"

"She is a friend of mine," said Mrs. Lanier, much surprised. "Why do you ask — have you ever seen her?"

"Yes, yes; and I have a copy of this picture. It is such a strange story; but first, before I say a word, please tell me who she is, and all about her."

"Why, Arthur, you seem greatly interested," returned Mrs. Lanier, with a smile. "The lady is my dear friend, Jane Chetwynd. We were classmates at boarding-school in New York; her father is the rich Mr. Chetwynd. You have heard of him, have n't you?"

"Yes, indeed; but please go on."

"Do you want all the history?"

"Everything, please. I 've a serious reason for wanting to know all about the originals of this photograph."

"Well, the gentleman is Jane's husband, Mr. Churchill, an Englishman, and the little girl is 'Lady Jane,' their only child. There 's quite a romance connected with Jane's history, and I 'm just now floundering in a sea of darkness in regard to that same Jane Chetwynd."

"If you please, go on, and perhaps I can help you out," urged the young man, eagerly and abruptly.

"Well, as it 's a subject I 'm greatly interested in, I don't mind telling you the whole story. Jane Chetwynd was the only daughter; her mother died when she was a child. Jane was her father's idol; he had great plans for her, and when she was only eighteen

he hoped she would marry one of the rich Bindervilles. Jane, however, married a young Englishman who was in her father's employ. The young man was handsome, as you can see by his picture, well born, and well educated; but he was unknown and poor. To Richard Chetwynd that was unpardonable, and therefore he disowned Jane—cut her off entirely, refused to see her, or even to allow her name to be mentioned.

"A cousin of Mr. Churchill, who lived in England, owned a fine ranch in Texas, and there the young couple went to pass their honeymoon. They were delighted with the ranch, and decided to make it a permanent home.

"Their little girl was born there, and was named for her mother. On account of some dainty little ways, and to avoid confusion, her father called her Lady Jane.

"In her frequent letters to me, my friend spoke of her as a remarkable child, and of course she was the idol of her parents. In spite of the trouble with her father, Jane never regretted her choice, and even her isolated life had many charms for her. She was of a quiet, domestic disposition, and loved the country. Indeed, I know her life there was one of idyllic happiness. When the child was three years old Jane sent me that picture; then about two more years passed, during which time I heard from her frequently, and after that suddenly the correspondence stopped. I was in Europe for a year, and when I returned I set to work to find out the cause. Many letters were returned from San Antonio, the nearest post-office; but finally we succeeded in communicating with the overseer on the ranch, who informed us that Mr. Churchill had died suddenly of a prevalent fever, the summer before,—more than two years ago now,—and that Mrs. Churchill with her little girl had left the ranch directly after her husband's death to return to New York, since which time he had received no news of her; and the overseer also expressed sur-

prise in his letter at her long silence, as he said she had left many valuable things that were to be sent to her when and where she should direct, after she reached New York; he had since received no instructions, and the property was still lying there.

"Then I wrote directly to New York to a friend who was very intimate at one time with the Chetwynds, for some information about Jane; but she could tell me nothing more than the newspapers told me, that Richard Chetwynd had gone abroad, to remain some years. Of Jane I could not hear a word.

"Sometimes I think she may have followed her father to Europe, and that they are reconciled and living there together. But why does she not write to me — to the friend whom she always loved so dearly?

"Then there is another thing that has worried me no little, although in itself it is a trifle. When we were at school together I had a little birthday gift made at Tiffany's for Jane, a silver jewel-box, engraved with pansies and forget-me-nots, and a lot of school-girl nonsense. I made the design myself, and the design for the monogram also. About a year ago I found *that very box* for sale at Madame Hortense's, on Canal Street. When I asked Hortense where she got it, she told me that it was left with her to sell by a woman who lived down town on Good Children Street, and she gave me the name and the address; but when I went there a day or two afterwards the woman had gone,—left mysteriously in the night, and none of the neighbors could tell me where she went. Of course the woman's sudden disappearance made me feel that there was something wrong about her, and I can't help thinking that she got the little box dishonestly. It may have been stolen, either in Texas or in New York, and finally drifted here for sale. I got possession of it at once, very thankful that such a precious relic of my girlhood should have accidentally fallen into my hands; but every time I look at it I feel that it is a key which might unlock a mystery if only I knew how to use it."

All the while Mrs. Lanier was speaking, Arthur Maynard followed every word with bright, questioning eyes and eager, intense interest. Sometimes he seemed about to interrupt her; then he closed his lips firmly and continued to listen.

Mrs. Lanier was looking at him inquiringly, and when he waited as if to hear more she said: "I have told you all. Now what have you to tell me?"

"Something quite as strange as anything you have told me," replied Arthur Maynard, with an enigmatical air. "You must not think you 're the only one with a mystery worthy the skill of a Parisian detective. If I had any such talent I might make myself famous, with your clues and my clues together."

"What in the world do you mean, Arthur? What do you know?—for pity's sake, tell me! You can't think how Jane Chetwynd's long silence distresses me."

"Fool that I was!" cried the young fellow, jumping up and pacing the room with a half-tragic air. "If I had n't been an idiot — a simpleton — a gosling — if I 'd had a spark of sense, I could have brought that same Jane Chetwynd, and the adorable little Lady Jane, straight to your door. Instead of that, I let them get off the train at Gretna alone when it was nearly dark, and— Heaven only knows what has happened to them!"

"Arthur Maynard, what *do* you mean?" asked Mrs. Lanier, rising to her feet, pale and trembling. "When — where — where is she now — where is Jane Chetwynd?"

"I wish I knew. I 'm as wretched and anxious as you are, Mrs. Lanier, and what has happened to-day has quite upset me; but I must tell you my story, as you have told yours."

And then, while Mrs. Lanier listened with clasped hands and intent gaze, Arthur Maynard told of the meeting with Lady Jane and her mother on the train, of the gift of "Tony," the blue heron, and of the separation at Gretna.

"Oh, Arthur, why — *why* did n't you go with them and bring them to me? She was a stranger, and she did n't know the way, and your being our friend and all."

"My dear Mrs. Lanier, she never mentioned your name or number. How could I guess you were the friend to whom she was going? and I did n't want to seem presuming."

"But where did she go? She never came here!"

"Wait till I tell you the rest, and then we will discuss that. I stood on the platform until the train started, and watched them walking toward the ferry, the mother very feebly, and the child skipping along with the little basket, delighted with her new possession; then I went back to my seat, angry enough at myself because I was n't with them, when what should I see on the floor, under their seat, but a book they had left. I have it now, and I 'll bring it to you to-morrow; inside of the book was a photograph — a duplicate of this, and on the fly-leaf was written 'Jane Chetwynd.'"

"I thought so! I knew it was Jane!" exclaimed Mrs. Lanier excitedly. "But she never came here. Where could she have gone?"

"That 's the mystery. She may have changed her mind and gone to a hotel, or something may have happened to her. I don't know. I don't like to think of it! However, the next day I advertised the book, and advertised it for a week; but it was never claimed, and from that day to this I 've never been able to discover either the mother or the child."

"How strange, how very strange!" said Mrs. Lanier, greatly troubled. "Why should she have changed her mind so suddenly? If she started to come to me, why did n't she come?"

"The only reasonable solution to the problem is that she changed her mind and went on to New York by the night-train. She evidently did not go to a hotel, for I have looked over all the hotel

registers of that time, and her name does not appear on any of them. So far there is nothing very mysterious; she might have taken the night-train."

"Oh, Arthur, she probably did. Why do you say she *might* have?"

"Because you see I have a sequel to my story. You had a sequel to yours, a sequel of a box. Mine is a sequel of a bird—the blue heron I gave the little Lady Jane. *I bought that same blue heron from a bird-fancier on Charter Street this very morning.*"

"How can you be sure that it is the same bird, Arthur? How can you be sure?"

"Because it was marked in a peculiar way. It had three distinct black crosses on one wing. I knew the rogue as soon as I saw him, although he has grown twice the size, and—would you believe it?—he has the same leather band on his leg that I sewed on more than two years ago."

"And you found out where the fancier bought him?" asked Mrs. Lanier breathlessly.

"Of course I asked, the first thing, and all the information I could get from the merchant was that he bought him from an Italian a few days before, who was very anxious to sell him. When I called the bird by his name, Tony, he recognized it instantly. So you see that he has always been called by that name."

"The child must have lost him, or he must have been stolen. Then the box, the jewel-box here too. Good heavens! Arthur, what can it mean?"

"It means that Mrs. Churchill never left New Orleans," said Arthur decidedly.

"My dear Arthur, you alarm me!" cried Mrs. Lanier; "there is something dreadful behind all this. Go on, and tell me everything you know."

"Well, after I bought the bird, and while I was writing my address for the man to send him home, a funny little old Frenchman came in, and suddenly pounced on Tony, and began to jabber in the most absurd way. I thought he was crazy at first; but after a while I made him understand that the heron belonged to me; and when I had calmed him down somewhat I gathered from his remarks that this identical blue heron had been the property of 'one leetle lady,' who formerly lived on Good Children Street."

"Good Children Street," interrupted Mrs. Lanier; "what a remarkable coincidence!"

"That the bird had been lost, and that he had searched everywhere to find it for the 'leetle lady.' Then I asked him for a description of the 'leetle lady.' And, as I live, Mrs. Lanier, he described that child to the life,"—and Arthur Maynard pointed to the photograph as he spoke.

"Oh, Arthur, can it be that Jane Chetwynd is *dead?* What else can it mean? Where is the child? I must see her. Will you go with me to Good Children Street early to-morrow?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Lanier. But she is not there; the old man told me a long story of a Madame Jozain, who ran away with the child."

"Madame Jozain!" cried Mrs. Lanier excitedly—"the same woman who had the jewel-box."

"Evidently the same, and we are on her track — or we should be, if she were alive; but unfortunately she 's dead. The little Frenchman says so, and the child is now in Margaret's Orphans' Home."

"Oh, I see it all now! It is as clear as day to me!" cried Mrs. Lanier, springing from her chair and walking excitedly back and forth. "It is all explained—the mysterious attraction I felt for that child from the first. Her eyes, her voice, her smile are Jane Chetwynd's. Arthur, would you know her again if you saw her?"

"Certainly; she has n't grown out of my recollection in two years, though of course she may not resemble the photograph so much. You see it is four or five years since that was taken; but she can't have changed in two years so that I won't know her, and I 'm very sure also that she 'll remember me."

"Well, come to-morrow at eleven, and I think I can have her here. The lovely child in Margaret's Home, in whom I have felt such an interest, must be the one. Her name is Jane. I will write to Margaret at once to bring her here to-morrow morning, and, Arthur, if you can identify her she is Jane Chetwynd's child without a doubt;—but Jane—poor Jane! What *has* happened to her? It is a mystery, and I shall never rest until it is explained."

"And perhaps you will hate me for my stupidity," replied Arthur, looking very much cast down, as he shook hands and said good-night.

"No, no, my dear boy. You were not in the least to blame, and perhaps your generosity in giving Lady Jane the blue heron may be the means of restoring her to her friends."

Thinking the matter over from Mrs. Lanier's point of view, Arthur went away somewhat comforted, but still very anxious about the developments the next day might bring forth.

Chapter XXXI

LADY JANE COMES TO HER OWN

The next morning, when Margaret brought little Jane, Mrs. Lanier sent for them to come to her room, and there she heard the strange story that Paichoux had told Margaret.

Putting together one thing and another, the incidents seemed to form a chain of which there was only one link missing, and that was an explanation of the mystery surrounding the fate of the young mother. What had become of her? And how had Madame Jozain got possession of the child, as well as of the property?

"It is work for a skilful detective," said Mrs. Lanier, when Margaret had told her of Paichoux's plan.

And Margaret replied that, with the aid of a little money, the snarl could soon be unraveled.

"The money will be forthcoming," returned Mrs. Lanier. "It shall be my sacred duty to begin an investigation as soon as the child's identity is established. Mr. Lanier will interest himself with me, and every possible effort shall be made to get at the bottom of the mystery. Meanwhile, my good Margaret, you must leave little Jane with me. Jane Chetwynd's child must not be dependent on charity."

To this Margaret readily agreed, and then Lady Jane was called from the nursery, where she had been with Mrs. Lanier's little girls during this long serious conversation.

The child came in dressed in her homely orphan's garb, with all her beautiful hair braided and hanging stiffly down her back; but she was lovely in spite of her unlovely attire, her sweet little

face was dimpled with smiles, and her wide eyes were full of pleasant expectation.

"Come here, my dear," said Mrs. Lanier, holding out her hands. "Now tell me, which name do you like best, Lady Jane, or simply Jane?"

She hesitated a moment and looked wistfully at Margaret, while a slight shadow passed over her face. "*I* like Lady Jane; but Mother Margaret likes Jane best."

Then Mrs. Lanier opened a drawer and took out a photograph in a velvet frame. "My dear," she said, holding it before her, "who are these?"

In an instant the child's face changed; every vestige of color fled from it, as she fixed her eyes on the picture with a look of eager affection and pitiful surprise. "It 's papa and mama!" she exclaimed passionately. "It 's my dear, dear mama!" Then, with a cry of distress, she threw herself into Margaret's arms and sobbed bitterly.

"This is proof enough for me," said Mrs. Lanier, as she laid the picture away; "the recognition was instantaneous and complete. She is Jane Chetwynd's child. Margaret, leave her to me; I will love her and comfort her."

An hour after Mrs. Lanier was sitting in her library, writing hastily and excitedly, when the door-bell rang, and, just as she was addressing a letter to "Richard Chetwynd," Arthur Maynard entered.

The boy looked quite pale and anxious, as he glanced at Mrs. Lanier's flushed, excited face.

"Don't ask me any questions; just wait a moment," she said, with a reassuring smile.

Presently there was a sound of children's voices on the stairs, and three little girls entered the room quietly and demurely. They

were dressed exactly alike in dainty white frocks and broad sashes; two were pale and dark; they were Ethel and May Lanier; and one was fair and rosy, with wonderful golden hair hanging in burnished, waving masses below her waist, while the thick fringe across her forehead, although it looked a little refractory, as though it had just been cut, gave her a charmingly infantile and picturesque appearance.

The moment the little Laniers saw Arthur Maynard they ran to him talking, and laughing gaily, while Lady Jane,— for it was she, quite metamorphosed through the skill of Mrs. Lanier's French maid, and one of Ethel's dainty suits,— remained standing shyly in the center of the room.

Mrs. Lanier was watching her sweet little face with its puzzled, anxious expression. She held her hands tightly clasped, and her soft brows were slightly contracted, while she looked at the merry group with large, serious eyes. Presently a winsome smile broke over her face, and going slowly forward she said softly: "If you please, are n't you the boy who gave me the blue heron?"

Arthur Maynard was quite beside himself with delight. Holding out both hands, he drew her to him, and putting his arm about her caressingly he said gaily: "Yes, Lady Jane, I 'm the very boy. And so you remember me? I thought you 'd forgotten me long ago."

"Oh, no, no, I had n't; but," with a little, tremulous smile, "you — you did n't know me, did you?"

"Yes, you darling, I did; I was only waiting to see if you really remembered me."

"Oh, but you did n't know I saw you once before."

"No, indeed. When and where was it?" asked Arthur eagerly.

"It was a long while ago. It was Mardi-gras, and I was lost; but you could n't see me, because I had on a domino," replied Lady Jane, with dancing eyes and roguish little smile. "I called you, and

you heard me, because you looked around; but you could n't see me."

"Well, I declare! Now I remember! Of course, I could n't guess that the little pink crumpled thing was Lady Jane. Why did n't you call me again?"

"Oh," with a little sigh. "I thought maybe you did n't remember me?"

"As if I could ever forget; but where is Tony? have you given him away?" and he looked into her eyes with a smile.

"No, I did n't give him away. I loved him too much to give him to any one; but he 's lost. He broke his string, while I was out singing, and Tante Pauline was too lame to catch him, and I searched and looked everywhere for him, and then I could n't sing any more — and —" and here she paused, flushing deeply while the tears gathered on her lashes.

"She 's just the same adorable little creature," whispered Arthur to Mrs. Lanier, while he stroked her hair softly. Then he bent over her and asked her very earnestly and gravely:

"Do you remember that day on the cars, Lady Jane, when I gave you Tony?"

"Why, yes, — or I would n't know you," she replied ingenuously.

"Well, your mama was with you then. Where is she now?"

"Oh," with a very sad sigh, "I don't know; she 's gone away. I thought she 'd come back, and I waited and waited; but now I don't look any more. I think she 's with papa, and is n't coming back."

"When did she go? My darling, try to remember about your mama," urged Mrs. Lanier gently.

"It was so long ago, I can't tell when it was," she said dejectedly. "I was ill, and when I got well Tante Pauline said she had gone."

"Was it in Good Children Street that she went?"

"No. It was before. It was away across the river, because Tante Pauline, and Mr. Raste, and I, and Tony in his basket, all came in a big boat."

"You see Jane Chetwynd never left Gretna," said Mrs. Lanier in an awe-struck voice.

"Where is Tante Pauline now?" continued Arthur.

"I don't know. I ran away, and I have n't seen her for ever so long."

"Why did you run away from her? Did n't you love her?"

"No, no! Please don't ask me,—please don't," and suddenly she covered her little flushed, troubled face with both hands and began to cry silently.

"We must n't question her any more, Arthur," said Mrs. Lanier softly, as she soothed the child. "Her little heart has been probed to the very depths. She is a noble little soul, and she won't utter a complaint against that wretched woman."

"Never mind, my darling; forget all about Tante Pauline. You will never see her again, and no one shall make you unhappy. You are my child now, and you shall stay with me always, and to-morrow we are going to buy Christmas presents for all your friends in Good Children Street."

"And I"— whispered Arthur, pressing his cheek close against her golden head — "I have a Christmas present for you; so wipe away your tears, and prepare to be very happy."

"I have just written to her grandfather," said Mrs. Lanier, after they had sent her away to the children, all smiles and dimples again. "I see by the papers that he has returned from Europe. There 's not the least doubt that she is Jane's child, and, if he has any heart, he 'll come and investigate this mystery. I don't dare to do anything until I hear from him."

"That will be very soon; he will probably be here in a day or two, for he is on his way now."

"Arthur, what do you mean? How has he heard?"

"Oh, Lady Jane has a great many friends who are deeply interested in her. Paichoux, the dairyman, has been in correspondence with the millionaire, and I have been interviewing Paichoux. The little Frenchman put me on Paichoux's track. It seems that Paichoux got Mrs. Churchill's watch from Madame Jozain's son, and Paichoux was inspired to write to the jeweler in New York, whose name and the number of the watch were on the inside of the case, to find out for whom that especial watch was made. After some delay a letter came from Mr. Richard Chetwynd himself, telling Paichoux that the watch was made for his daughter Jane Chetwynd. The jeweler had forwarded Paichoux's letter to Mr. Chetwynd, who was in Paris, and the millionaire has hastened home to investigate, which is a favorable omen for Lady Jane."

The next day, the day before Christmas, and just one year from the time when Lady Jane sat on the church steps eating the bread and apple supplied her by a charitable impulse, she was making almost a royal progress in Mrs. Lanier's carriage, as lovely in her rich dress as a little fairy, and every bit as much admired as Pepsie had predicted she would be when, in the future, she should ride in a blue chariot drawn by eight white horses. Mrs. Lanier's generosity allowed her to remember every one with suitable gifts, and her visit to Good Children Street was something to be long remembered. Mrs. Lanier almost blushed with shame and regret when she found herself once more in the presence of Diana d'Hautreve, to think that for all these years she had forgotten one who was once a queen in society both by right of birth and wealth. "It is unpardonable in me," she said to herself when she saw the gentle, lonely woman hold the child to her heart so fondly. "It is unpardonable to forget and neglect one so entirely worthy of the best, simply because she is poor. However, now that I have discovered her through Lady Jane, I will try to make up for the indifference of years, by every attention that I can show her."

While these thoughts were passing through Mrs. Lanier's mind, Lady Jane was unfolding before Mam'selle Diane's dazzled eyes a rich mourning silk. "You must have it made right away," she whispered, pressing her rosy cheek to her friend's, "for Mrs. Lanier says you will visit your friends again, and I want you to wear my Christmas present the first time you go out."

Then Pepsie was made happy with a beautiful wheeled chair for the street, which was so arranged with numerous springs that she could be lifted over rough places without hurting her poor back, and Madelon was the recipient of a beautiful warm cloak, and Tite's love of finery was fully gratified by a gay hat "wid fedders on it." Little Gex was fitted out with a supply of useful articles, and the Paichoux, one and all, were remembered with gifts suitable for each; while the orphans' Christmas tree was loaded with presents from Lady Jane, who only the year before had clung to the railings, cold and hungry, and peeped in at the glittering display which was being prepared for other little orphans not half as friendless and needy as she was.

And the homely, kind face of Margaret fairly shone with happiness, as she watched her little favorite dispensing her pretty gifts with a beaming smile of love and good-will to all.

And there was one hour of that happy Christmas eve that Lady Jane never forgot. It was when Margaret took her into the chapel and bade her kneel before the statue of our Saviour, who was once a little child, and thank him devoutly for all the good things that had come to her. Then, when she rose from her knees, the sister who had taught her music played a sweet *Ave Maria* on the organ, and the child's angelic voice rose upward in a rapturous song of praise and adoration; while Margaret knelt, with bowed head and clasped hands, patient, humble, resigned, but yet sorrowful at losing the lamb she had taken to her heart and cherished so tenderly.

Chapter XXXII

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

It was Christmas evening, and Mrs. Lanier's beautiful house was bright with lights and flowers, and merry with music and laughter.

There were, besides the little Laniers and Lady Jane, a dozen children or more, who had been invited to see the wonderful Christmas-tree, which Mr. and Mrs. Lanier and Arthur Maynard had spent a good part of the day in decorating. It stood at one end of the drawing-room, and its broad branches were fairly bending beneath the treasures heaped upon them. It glowed and sparkled with the light of a hundred wax candles, reflected over and over by innumerable brilliant objects until it seemed like Moses's burning bush, all fire and flame; and amid this radiant mass of color and light were the most beautiful gifts for every member of the family, as well as for the happy little visitors. But the object which attracted the most curiosity and interest was a large basket standing at the foot of the tree.

"Whom is that basket for, papa?" asked Ethel Lanier of her father, who was unfastening and distributing the presents.

"We shall see presently, my dear," replied Mr. Lanier, glancing at Lady Jane, who stood, a radiant little figure, beside Arthur Maynard, watching every movement with sparkling eyes and dimpling smiles.

At last, with a great deal of difficulty, the basket was untied, and Mr. Lanier read in a loud, distinct voice from a card attached

to it, "For Lady Jane Churchill. With Arthur Maynard's love and good wishes."

"There, I thought it was for Lady Jane," cried Ethel delightedly. "I know it 's something lovely."

Mr. Lanier, with no little ceremony, handed the basket to Arthur, who took it and gave it to Lady Jane with a low bow.

"I hope you will like my present," he said, smiling brightly, while he helped the wondering child untie the strings that fastened the cover.

Her little face was a study of mingled curiosity and expectancy, and her eyes sparkled with eagerness as she bent over the basket.

"It 's so large. What can it be? Oh, oh! It 's Tony!" she cried, as the cover was lifted, and the bird hopped gravely out and stood on one leg, winking and blinking in the dazzling light. "It 's Tony! dear, dear Tony!" and in an instant she was on her knees hugging and kissing the bird passionately.

"I told you I would find him for you," whispered Arthur, bending over her, almost as happy as she.

"And you knew him by the three little crosses, did n't you? Oh, you 're so good, and I thank you so much," she said, lifting her lovely, grateful eyes to the boy's face. She was smiling, but a tear glistened on her lashes.

"What a darling she is!" said Mrs. Lanier fondly. "Is n't it pretty to see her with the bird? Really it is an exquisite picture."

She was like an anxious mother over a child that had just been restored to her. "You know me, Tony, don't you? and you 're glad to see me?" she asked, over and over, while she stroked his feathers and caressed him in the tenderest way.

"Do you think he remembers you, Lady Jane?" asked Mr. Lanier, who was watching her with a smile of amusement.

"Oh yes, I know he does; Tony could n't forget me. I 'm sure he 'll come to me if I call him."

"'OH, OH! IT 'S TONY!' CRIED LADY JANE."

"Please try him. Oh, do try him!" cried Ethel and May.

Mr. Lanier took the bird and placed him behind a chair at the extreme end of the room, where he stood gravely blinking and nodding, but the moment he heard Lady Jane's little chirp, and "Tony, Tony," he ran fluttering to her and nestled close against her.

Every one was pleased with this exhibition of the bird's intelligence, and the children were quite wild over the new acquisition. The other presents were forgotten for the moment, and they could do nothing but watch every movement with admiration and wonder.

To Lady Jane the recovery of her lost treasure was the crowning point of happiness, and she consented reluctantly to leave him alone in the conservatory, where he was to spend the night, and where he looked very comfortable, as well as picturesque, standing on one leg under a large palm.

"Does n't she dance like a little fairy!" said Arthur admiringly to Mrs. Lanier, as they stood, a little later, watching the children dancing.

"Yes, she is very graceful and altogether charming," replied Mrs. Lanier. "It is delightful to see her so happy after all she has suffered."

"I don't imagine she will care half as much for her rich grandfather as she does for Tony," returned Arthur. "You see she 's acquainted with Tony, and she is n't acquainted with her grandfather. I hope he 'll be decent to her," he added anxiously.

"It is almost time for him to be here," said Mrs. Lanier, glancing at the clock. "Mr. Lanier will meet him at the station and bring him here, if he will accept our hospitality. I 'll confess I 'm filled with consternation. He used to be such a stern, cold man; he never even softened to Jane's young friends; he was polite and kind, but never genial, and I dare say he has quite forgotten me. It 's a trial for me to meet him with this awful mystery hanging over Jane's last

days. Oh, I hope he will take kindly to the child! He idolized her mother before she thwarted his plans, and now I should think his remorse would be terrible, and that he would do everything to atone for his unkindness."

"I have faith in Lady Jane," laughed Arthur. "It must be a hard heart to withstand her winning ways. I 'll wager before a week that the old millionaire will be her devoted slave."

Just at that moment a servant entered, and handed Mrs. Lanier a card. "It is Mr. Chetwynd," she said to Arthur. "They have come; he is in the library, and Mr. Lanier asks me to bring the child."

A few moments later, Mrs. Lanier led Lady Jane into the room where Richard Chetwynd waited to receive her. He was a tall, pale man, with deep, piercing eyes, and firmly closed lips, which gave character to a face that did not lack kindliness of expression. As she advanced a little constrainedly, holding the child by the hand, he came forward to meet her with an air of friendly interest.

"Perhaps you have forgotten me, Mrs. Lanier," he said, cordially extending his hand, "but I remember you, although it is some time ago that you used to dine with my daughter in Gramercy Park."

"Oh no, I have not forgotten you, Mr. Chetwynd; but I hardly expected you to recall me among all Jane's young friends."

"I do. I do perfectly," he replied, with his eyes fixed on Lady Jane, who clung to Mrs. Lanier and looked at the tall, grave stranger with timid scrutiny.

Then he held out his hand to the child. "And this is Jane Chetwynd's daughter. There is no doubt of it. She is the image of her mother," he said in a low, restrained voice. "I was not prepared to see such a living proof. She is my little Jane as she was when a child — my little Jane — my darling! Mrs. Lanier, will you excuse me! — the sight of her has quite unnerved me"; and suddenly

sinking into a chair he pressed the child to his heart and hid his face on her bright golden head.

What passed between Lady Jane and her grandfather, Mr. and Mrs. Lanier never knew, for they slipped quietly out of the room, and left the cold, stern man alone with the last of his family—the child of that idolized but disobedient daughter, who had caused him untold sorrow, and whom he had never forgiven until that moment, when he held in his arms, close to his heart, the child, her living image.

It was some time before Mr. Chetwynd appeared, and when he did he was as cold and self-possessed as if he had never felt a throb of emotion, or shed a tear of sorrow on the pretty head of the child, who held his hand, and prattled as freely and confidingly as though she had known him always.

"What will Mother Margaret say," she exclaimed, looking at Mrs. Lanier with wide, glistening eyes, "when I tell her that I 've found Tony and my grandpapa both in one Christmas? I never saw a grandpapa before. Pepsie read to me about one in a book, and he was very cross; but this one is n't. I think he 's very good, because he says that he will give me everything I wish, and I know I shall love him a great deal."

"Now, Lady Jane, confess to me, and I 'll never tell," whispered Arthur with an air of great secrecy. "Which do you love best, Tony or your new grandpapa?"

She raised her clear eyes to the roguish face of the boy with a little perplexed smile, and then replied unhesitatingly: "Well, I 've known Tony longer, but I think I 'll love my grandpapa as well by and by, because, you know, he 's my grandpapa."

Arthur laughed heartily at the clever way in which she evaded the question, and remarked to Mrs. Lanier that Lady Jane would wind her grandfather around her little finger before a month was over. Which prediction was likely to prove true, for Mr. Chetwynd

did not seem to have any other interest in life than to gratify every wish the child expressed.

"She has taken complete possession of me," he said to Mrs. Lanier, "and now my greatest happiness will be to make her happy. She is all I have, and I shall try to find in her the comfort her mother deprived me of."

In spite of his affection for the child, his feelings did not soften toward the mother; he could not forget that she had disappointed him and preferred a stranger to him; that she had given up wealth and position to bury herself in obscurity with a man he hated. It was a bitter thought, yet he would spare no pains to solve the mystery that hung over her last days.

Money and influence together soon put the machinery of the law in motion; therefore it was not a month after Mr. Chetwynd's arrival in New Orleans before everything was as clear as day. The young widow was traced to Madame Jozain's; there were many who remembered her death and funeral. The physician's certificate at the Board of Health bore the name of Dr. Debrot, who was found, and interviewed during one of his lucid moments; he described the young mother and child, and even remembered the blue heron; and his testimony, sad though it was, was still a comfort to Jane Chetwynd's friends. She had died of the same fever that killed her husband, and she had been carefully nursed and decently buried. Afterward, the Bergeron tomb was opened, the remains identified, and then sent to New York to rest with her mother, in the stately Chetwynd tomb, in Greenwood cemetery.

Then a careful search was made for her personal effects, but nothing was recovered except the watch that Paichoux was fortunate enough to secure. Mr. Chetwynd handed Paichoux a large check in exchange for it, but the honest man refused to take any more than he had paid Raste Jozain in order to get possession of it. However, the

LADY JANE AND HER GRANDFATHER.

millionaire proved that he was not ungrateful nor lacking in appreciation, when he presented him with a rich, plain watch suitably inscribed, from the donor to a most worthy friend. And when the pretty Marie was married, she received from the same jeweler who made the watch an exquisite silver tea-service, which was the pride of her life, and which was cherished not only for its value, but because it was a gift from Lady Jane's grandpapa.

Mr. Chetwynd made a number of visits to Good Children Street in company with Mrs. Lanier and Lady Jane, and there were a great many long conversations between Mam'selle Diane, the millionaire, and the banker's wife, while Lady Jane played with her jolly little friend, the canary, among the branches of the rose-bush. During these conversations there was a great deal of argument and anxious urging on the part of the visitors, and a great many excuses and much self-depreciation on the part of the gentle, faded lady.

"I have been buried so long," she would say pathetically, "that the great world will appal and confuse me. I shall be like a blind person suddenly made sensible of the light."

"But you will soon become accustomed to the light," urged Mrs. Lanier.

"And I might long for seclusion again; at my age one cannot easily change one's habits."

"You shall have all the seclusion you wish for," said Mr. Chetwynd kindly.

"Besides I am so old-fashioned," murmured Mam'selle Diane, blushing deeply.

"A quality which I greatly admire," returned Mr. Chetwynd, with a courtly bow.

"And think how Lady Jane loves you," said Mrs. Lanier, as if to clinch the argument.

"Yes; my love for her and hers for me are the strongest points in the situation," replied Mam'selle Diane reflectively; "when I think of that I can hardly refuse to comply with your wishes."

At that time it seemed as if Lady Jane acted the part of fairy godmother to those who had been her friends in her days of adversity; for each one had only to express a wish and it was gratified.

Pepsie's cottage in the country was about to become a reality. In one of the charming shady lanes of Carrollton they found just such a bowery little spot as the girl wished for, with a fine strip of land for a garden. One day Mr. Chetwynd and Lady Jane went down to Good Children Street and gave the deed of it to Mademoiselle Madelon Modeste Ferri, which was Pepsie's baptismal name, although she had never been called by it in all her life. The little cripple was so astonished and delighted that she could find no words of thanks; but after a few moments of very expressive silence she exclaimed: "After all, my cards were right, for they told me over and over that I should go to live in the country; and now I 'm going, thanks to Lady Jane."

When little Gex was asked what he most wished for in the world, he hesitated for a long time, and finally confessed that the desire of his life was to go back to Paris.

"Well, you shall go, Mr. Gex," said Lady Jane confidently, "and I shall see you there, because I 'm going to Paris with grandpapa very soon."

It is needless to say that Gex went, and the little shop in Good Children Street saw him no more forever.

And Margaret — the good Margaret. What could Lady Jane do for her? Only the noble woman and the destitute orphans could testify to the generous aid that came yearly in the shape of a check for a large amount from Lady Jane for dear Mother Margaret's home.

"And Mam'selle Diane,—dear Mam'selle! what can I give her?" asked Lady Jane eagerly.

"We have our plans for Mam'selle Diane, my dear," said Mrs. Lanier. "There is only one thing to do for her, and that is to take her with you. Your grandpapa has begged her to take charge of your education. Poor, lonely woman; she loves you dearly, and in spite of her reluctance to leave her seclusion, I think she would go to the world's end with you."

And so it was arranged that when Mr. Chetwynd and Lady Jane left New Orleans, Mam'selle Diane d'Hautreve went with them, and the little house and tiny garden were left to solitude, while the jolly canary was sent to keep Tony company in Mrs. Lanier's conservatory.

Chapter XXXIII

AS IT IS NOW

All this happened years ago, some ten or twelve, more or less, and there have been many changes in that time.

In front of the iron railing where Lady Jane clung on that cold Christmas eve, peering into the warmth and light of the Orphans' Home, there is now a beautiful little park, with magnolias, oaks, fragrant white jasmine, and pink flowering crape-myrtle. The grass is green, and the trees make shadows on the pretty little pond, the tiled bridge and shelled walks, the cactus and palmetto. Flowers bloom there luxuriantly, the birds sing merrily, and it is a spot beloved of children. Always their joyous laugh can be heard mingled with the songs of birds and the distant hum of many little voices in the Orphans' Home a few paces away.

In the center of that square on a green mound, bordered with flowers, stands a marble pedestal, and on that pedestal is a statue. It is the figure of a woman, seated and holding a little orphan to her heart. The woman has a plain, homely face, the thin hair is combed back austerely from the broad forehead, the eyes are deep-set, the features coarse, the mouth wide. She is no high-born dame of delicate mold, but a woman of the people—untaught, honest, simple, industrious. Her plain gown falls around her in scanty lines; over her shoulders is modestly folded a little shawl; her hands, that caress the orphan at her side, are large and rough with honest toil; but her face, and her whole plain figure, is beautiful with purity and goodness. It is Margaret, the orphans' friend, who, though a destitute orphan

herself, by her own virtue and industry earned the wealth to found homes and asylums, to feed and clothe the indigent, to save the wretched and forsaken, and to merit the title of Mother to the Motherless.

And there sits her marble image, through summer's heat and winter's cold, serene and gentle, under the shadow of the home she founded, and in sound of the little voices that she loved so well; and there she will sit when those voices are silent and those active little

LADY JANE AND MAM'SELLE D'HAUTREVE BEFORE THE STATUE OF MOTHER MARGARET.

forms are dust, as a monument of honest, simple virtue and charity, as well as an enduring testimony to the nobility of the women who erected this statue in respectful recognition of true greatness under the homely guise of honest toil.

If one of my young readers should happen near this spot just at the right moment on some fine evening in early spring, he or she might chance to notice an elegant carriage drawn by two fine horses,

and driven by a sleek darky in plain livery, make the circuit of the place and then draw up near the statue of Margaret, while its occupants, an elderly woman of gentle and distinguished appearance, and a beautiful young girl, study the homely, serene face of the orphans' friend.

Presently the girl says reverently, "Dear Mother Margaret! She was a saint, if earth ever knew one."

"Yes; she was a noble woman, and she came from the poor and lowly. My dear, she is an example of a great truth, which may be worthy of consideration. It is, that virtue and purity do not disdain to dwell in the meanest shrine, and that all the titles and wealth of earth could not ennoble her as her own saintly character has done."

The occupants of the carriage are Lady Jane and Mam'selle Diane d'Hautreve.

The beautiful child is now a beautiful girl of seventeen. Her education is finished, and she has not disappointed the expectations of her friends. At home and abroad she is not only known as the Chetwynd heiress, but also for her many accomplishments, as well as for her beauty and charitableness. And her wonderful voice, which time has enriched and strengthened, is a constant delight to those who hear it, although it is never heard in public, save in the service of God, or for some work of charity. The poor and the lowly, the sick and the dying have often been carried to the very gates of heaven on its melodious strains, and the good sisters and grateful little orphans in Margaret's Home count it a day long to be remembered when Lady Jane sits down among them and sings some of the hymns that she loved so well in those old days when she herself was a homeless little orphan.

Mr. Chetwynd still likes to spend part of the year in Paris; but he has purchased a beautiful winter home in one of the lovely streets

in the garden district, not far from Mrs. Lanier, and Lady Jane and Mam'selle Diane spend several months every spring in its delightful seclusion.

And here Madelon comes to bring her delicious cakes, which she now sells to private customers instead of having a stand on the Rue Bourbon; and Tante Modeste often rattles up in her milk cart, a little older, a little stouter, but with the same bright face; and on the same seat where Lady Jane used to sit is one of Marie's little ones, instead of one of her own. "Only think, my dear," she says proudly, "Tiburce has graduated, and now he is studying law with Marie's husband, who is rising fast in his profession."

But among all her happy hours there are none pleasanter than those she spends with Pepsie in the pretty cottage at Carrollton, when the bright-faced little cripple, who seems hardly a day older, spreads out her beautiful needlework and expatiates eloquently on the fine results she obtains from the Paris patterns and exquisite material with which she is constantly supplied. She is a natural little artist with the needle, her dainty work sells readily and profitably, and she is in a fair way to become rich. "Just think," she says with one of her broad smiles, "I could buy a piano now myself, if I wanted to, and perhaps I shall, so that you can play to me when you come."

During sunny mornings, on a certain lawn in the garden district, there is nearly always a merry party playing tennis, while a gentle-faced woman sits near holding a book, which she seldom reads, so interested is she in watching a golden-haired girl and a handsome young man, who frequently interrupt the game to point out the grave antics of a stately blue heron, that stalks majestically about the lawn or poses picturesquely on one leg under a glossy palm.

But we must not approach the border-land of romance. Lady Jane is no longer a child, and Arthur Maynard is years older than the boy who gave her the blue heron.

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